dissent

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Harold Rosenberg

"Death of the Family"
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Left Politics in the Nixon Era
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More Sorrow Than Pity
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The State of Our Culture

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Paul Goodman

1911–1972

Many years ago Paul Goodman called me on the phone. "How are you?" I asked. "Right this minute," he replied, "I feel lousy. Underneath, though, I'm all right. Below that there is, of course, the usual nagging. At bottom, however, I'm really fine."

How could a man conscious of so many layers of mood be a Type? Successful cultural performers of our time—Marinetti, Breton, Sartre, Buckminster Fuller, Warhol, McLuhan—are keyed to a single emotional state, one that is in accord with their invented personae. Paul Goodman preferred himself as is. If there was any playacting in his public identity, it was in his insistence on remaining the same Goodman, the kid off the streets, in a woolen pullover, with rumpled hair and no tie. A primitive with a Ph.D.

An actor on the public stage who plays himself is headed for trouble. Like Eugene McCarthy, Paul enraged his followers by refusing to imitate their fiction of him. It is touching that his last work should be an attempt to explain himself to his students at the University of Hawaii, to tell them "how I am in the world"; and it is interesting that he should have called this essay "Finite Experience," in order to set himself off against abstractions.

Paul's creed was "the facts of life." Nothing less! It entailed endless psychic shifting, from glorying in the Greeks, the Old Testament, tales of the Buddha, to cruising for rough trade, telling it to City Hall, and arguing with Chomsky about language. The "facts" also included beings inherited from literature and myth, e.g., angels, saints—when Goodman writes "Saints, of course, can keep going," he is acknowledging the existence of these exalted beings and applying them as a practical measure of what he, Goodman, can't do, since he's not a saint.

The variety of Goodman's encounters amounted in effect to playing hide and seek with his entourage (in his case a more accurate word than "audience," since people who were close to him physically counted for more than the abstract presence of admiring readers). His genius lay in his range, a vertical span joining high and low. Phenomena and phrases lying in the gutter, which most writers pass by, were mixed by Paul into his gravest utterances (and he was not ashamed to be high-toned, to speak of the "lordly" Hudson, and to declaim "to us threadbare men of letters, heirs of humanism and the Enlightenment, it is again the entrenched system served by a priestly caste," and so on).

It was his hospitality to the familiar, to the unretouched datum too close to be noticed, as in "The Break-Up of Our Camp," that held me many years ago, though the first writing of his I admired, when we were both contributors to the *Symposium* in the early 1930s and Paul was about 23, was a brilliant criticism of functional architecture, which, in an approach that was to become characteristic, he demonstrated was not "functional" at all.

Theories of architecture, of community, of human nature, of energy (how to get "an extra ounce of strength"), plus flora and fauna of New York, his *Empire City*, including public officials, conceptualized plutocrats, grand pianos, Jewish jokes and Jewish "facts of life," the latter free of the usual garnishings of sour cream, dialect and pantomime, that is, free of "color" but with a respect for things as they are.

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For a time Paul could have been America's foremost Radical. Who was set so intrinsically against more forms of socially expected behavior? It tires me merely to count the fronts on which he kept himself engaged: the economic system, the moral system, the educational system, the sexual system, bureaucratic smugness, censorship, drug laws, the literary setup, the work setup. What favored him was that he saw all these as one, with which the living person was compelled to deal simultaneously. Everything is everybody's business. Paul considered himself a citizen and a patriot. Nominally, this deprived him of the title Radical. He was only living in the America he discovered and reporting on its mistakes and lacks.

His struggles were directed not toward a new institutional condition but for what he came to call autonomy, the privilege of going about things in the best way one was capable of. What's to prevent it? Not anything in particular, just everything. Paul and I conducted a dual lecture at Wayne State University in Detroit. The topic given us was: "The Rebel, Is There a Place for Him in Our Society?" The managers of the program had assumed that Paul and I would both be on the side of "the rebel" and tried without success to get a "conservative" to oppose us. It turned out that we were on the same side, but both of us against the rebel as a nuisance. I objected to the role, to some of the people who had assumed it in order to capture public attention, and to their failure to change anything. Paul followed up by offering as the alternative to the rebel his idea of autonomy. A young man who wants to practice medicine, he contended, ought to do his utmost to obtain a good medical education; under present conditions, this effort is bound to put him into conflict with the medical school, not because he is a rebel but because he loves medicine.

Autonomy is opposition *in action*. You either do it your way or "their" way. That there is nothing to prevent your way and their way from coalescing makes the position of autonomy all the more difficult. You have to take on the classical task of knowing yourself and being true to it. For instance, Paul liked dogs, and it is the duty of a rebel to purge himself of trite sentiments. Breton, for example, declared it to be a scandal that Trotsky was a dog lover, and cited it as an illustration of uneven development. An autonomous person disregards historical imperatives, takes his feelings as he finds them, and expresses them to suit himself. Paul's dog was an ugly mutt, large, shapeless, a barrel on legs, and to me a pain in the ass. It was inconceivable, however, that Paul would own a handsome terrier or a standard poodle or that he would transcend liking mutts.

For one who believes in self-affirmation, the kind of self one happens to have is of the utmost importance. One might agree with Paul's philosophy but have a self easier to deal with. On the other hand, it may be that the idea of doing everything one's own way comes from the consciousness of having too many inacceptable inclinations, so that unless one defiantly insisted on asserting oneself as a whole as a matter of principle, he would be obliged to extinguish the greater part of his personality.

Paul was no Marquis de Sade; the delinquencies he embraced were not of the kind to make him a menace or put him in danger of being locked up. The worst were merely bad enough to keep him in trouble with himself. Theoretically, his desires were not inconsistent with the general good; in other circumstances they might even have been considered virtues. (It was his more obvious virtues, e.g., his ideal of community programs, that I found least to my taste.) With a degree of luck he could have lived well—"fortunately, I have low standards of what is excellent as happiness"—and in all probability he did do better than most.

If his behavior seemed to many outrageous—there was a period, before *Growing Up Absurd* made him famous, in which it was common to hear him reviled—it was less because of any harm he did than because his values did not fit theirs. He was the traditional outsider; for a time, other outsiders enclosed him, then he became outside to them too. Paul recognized that he was oppressed not by any restraints put upon him but by the condition of being incommensurate. "My usual gripe has been," he wrote in "Finite Experience," "not that I am imprisoned, but that I am in exile or was born on the wrong planet." This sentiment of an adolescent was expressed when Paul was sixty—evidence

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that though his desires were not extreme they remained unadjustable.

In the impulse to remodel his environment to fit himself, the "autonomist" becomes a revolutionary. But not a rabid one, for he is aware that his task is hopeless—even if he succeeded, success would come too late. Hence his radicalism consists in urging the advantages of a society that would fit him, in contrast to the present society that fits nobody. In being the projection of a single person, utopias, no matter how far-fetched, are humanly more real than the schemes of ideologists.

Perhaps it was his sense of being exiled from the world that made the idea of handiwork, of using tools and materials, so important to Paul —I never met anyone with less talent for handling a hammer. His enthusiasm for group activity must also have been a means to overcome isolation. Given his brilliance, he was certain to be a leader, but his superiority was equally certain to leave him disappointed. Human interchange was his axiom, and among his few fixed ideas was the therapy of bursting into tears.

In sum, he conceived his uniqueness as a burden, as well as a duty in the sense of the Old Testament Jonah. He wished to be divested of it, to be released from the command. But his ego, subtle, proud, complex, and fatally introverted, could not submit to his yearning to migrate to "the other planet" of people and things. In the end, his "finite experience" became the experience of loneliness and fear of death. Against these, he raised the theological slogan of "patience and fortitude," and with the bravery of a true man of ideas fought back by writing a book.

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WINTER 1973

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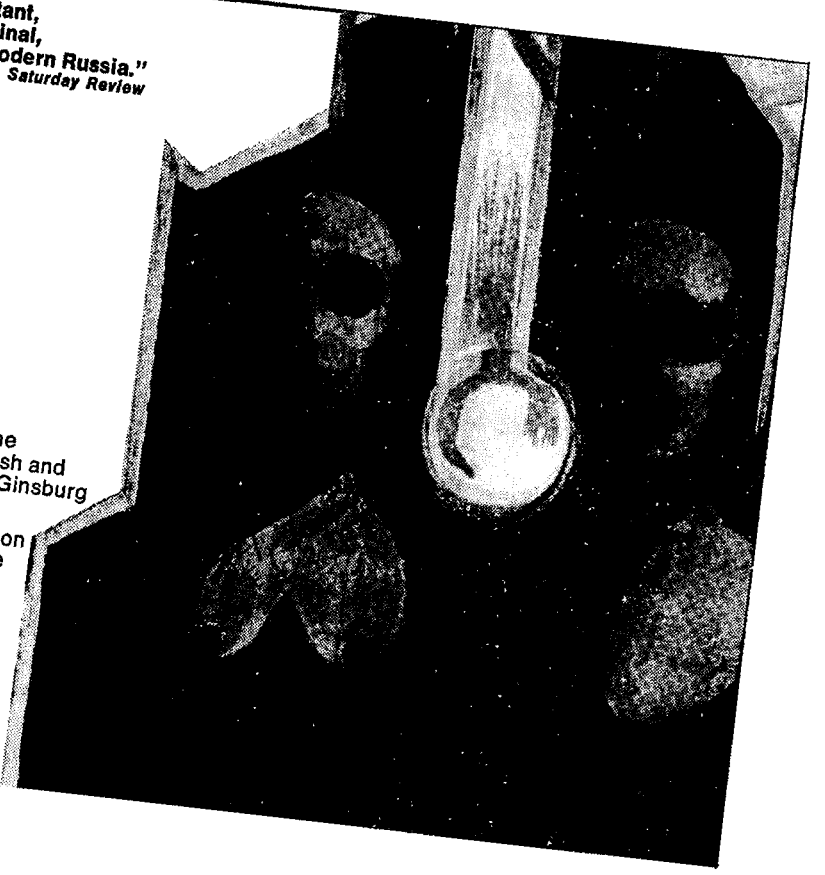

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Irving Howe

Picking Up the Pieces

I write a few days after the election, you will read this some weeks later. By the time you do, there will have appeared endless analyses, ranging from the trivial to the profound. And by the time you reach these lines you will probably be sick of explanations, theories, impressions.

So let me move very quickly past the obvious causes of the McGovern defeat, then discuss some of its underlying implications, and finally come to some problems of the liberal-left in the coming years.

I

SOME REASONS are clear to everyone. George Wallace's enforced withdrawal from the campaign meant that a majority of his supporters shifted to Nixon; it was a mistake to suppose that a symmetrical populism was at work in both the Wallace and McGovern movements; what most stirred Wallace supporters seems to have been an implicit racism and a general disgruntlement with social innovations; clearly Nixon could exploit such sentiments far better than McGovern. The split in the Democratic party was never healed; some old-line politicians must secretly have preferred to see McGovern fall on his face; and the McGovern people, out of ideological zeal and naive arrogance, made disastrous errors (like barring the Daley delegates from the Democratic convention). The official AFL–CIO stand of "neutrality" (in practice often an embittered assault on "the kids" and "the kooks") also hurt. There were other factors, all by now sufficiently rehearsed. Let's turn to a few that are more elusive and thereby perhaps more fundamental.

- The Soviet bloc (toward which McGovern was supposed to be too "soft") played a large if unmeasured role in helping Nixon. It did this not so much through statements of preference in *Pravda,* but still more through diplomatic arrangements worked out between Russian negotiators and Kissinger. Nixon gained the advantage, first of all, of being able to appear as a statesman of peace and conciliation. But then, once he took a tough line on Vietnam, starting to mine the Haiphong harbor and to bomb North Vietnam at a fearful rate, the response of the Communist powers was so ineffectual, so merely *pro forma,* that (a) sophisticated observers could speculate it was all done by prearrangement and the Russians and Chinese had in effect decided to give Nixon a free hand in Vietnam; (b) large numbers of ordinary people in this country must have felt that Nixon had succeeded in pulling off a major gamble. Thereby he was enabled to adopt the two-sided stance of being both a man of conciliation and a man able to stare down the Communists in a confrontation. Conciliation and confrontation together: a powerful mixture.

- Perhaps the most deeply felt though seldom articulated impulses driving large numbers of voters, many of them traditionally Democratic, toward Nixon was a complex concerning race, violence in the streets, law & order, campus upheaval, drugs, and busing—in short, "the so-

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cial issues." Through a series of code words that his audiences immediately grasped, Nixon masterfully exploited the desires of middle-class, blue-collar, and white ethnic groups for assurances of stability. Fundamentally, I think, the vote for Nixon was an anti-turmoil, anti-ferment vote. It was not reactionary in explicit intent, though open to reactionary manipulation; it was not reactionary in regard to economic issues, though likely in its objective consequences to help those who are reactionary in regard to economic issues.

To some extent we were paying the price for the "confrontation politics" of the '60s, the "revolutionary" bluster of the Tom Haydens, the Kunstlers, the Eldridge Cleavers, the Stokely Carmichaels, the Rap Browns—all those who gained prominence on TV and in the press, only to collapse into the political impotence which had been the reality all along.

Behind the mass of electoral sentiment there are, at one end, urgent problems and, at the other, a growth of what I'd call social callousness, perhaps social meanness. The urgent problems have to do with safety in the streets—any liberal or radical who by now denies the reality of this problem is simply deluding himself (or staying off the streets). McGovern never really responded to or seized upon this matter; his high moralistic stance seemed too distant for millions of whites who may not think of themselves as prejudiced but who nevertheless look over their shoulders when they notice a group of black youngsters behind them.

As for social callousness, there is first the fact that our B–52s have kept raining vast quantities of bombs on Vietnam while not many people in the U.S. seem disturbed, at least as long as American casualties decline. Equally troubling was the apparent indifference of large numbers of voters to the repeated exposure of scandal and sleaziness in the Nixon administration—Watergate, ITT, etc. And most troubling of all has been the almost complete evaporation of the widespread good feeling toward blacks that one could detect only a decade ago; indeed, the replacement of this feeling by a mixture of fear and contempt, a tacit acceptance of some notion of innate inferiority that leads "them" to drugs, mugging, violence, family disintegration, etc.

This new attitude toward the blacks is a terrifying phenomenon, not least of all because it subsists on a vicious circle of hostility. The *New York Times*/Yankelovich poll, which proved to be quite accurate, asked people: "Do you feel that minority groups are receiving too much, too little, or just about the right amount of attention?" Answers to this question are more likely to yield authentic responses than answers to formal questions about civil rights. And the responses are illuminating. Even after four years of what black leaders have assailed as "benign neglect" of minority needs, four out of every ten voters answered, "too much attention." And of these, almost 80 percent said they would vote for Nixon. A third of the Democrats polled said they would defect to Nixon, and of this group over half said blacks have been getting "too much attention." Compared with recent elections, there were twice as many Democratic defectors as usual and the defectors are twice as likely to resent minority-group gains.

Race, it now seems, was the dirty little secret of the campaign—and those intellectuals who supported Nixon because, as they proclaimed, he had been "prudent" in his four years of office were right in a way that (one hopes) they did not quite grasp.

• There remains another factor, one that people like ourselves are disinclined to stress but great masses of voters do. And that is the personal assessment made of McGovern. Evidently, there was little affection for Nixon in the electorate, but he did convey to it some sense of assurance as to what he would (and more important, would not) do. McGovern failed to establish a parallel confidence. The Democratic convention seems to have had negative repercussions to an extent that we did not, but should have, realized at the time: you aren't going to win elections in this country by staging conventions at which a good many delegates have gone to graduate school and where people like Bella Abzug are allowed to take the spotlight. And then, of course, came the ghastly Eagleton affair, which destroyed whatever chance there was for McGovern to widen his base of support.

The sense that many people seem to have had of McGovern might be put into these words: "He is a decent and honest fellow, probably more so than Nixon, but he has all those oddballs around him, people who if they

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gained power might keep the country in turmoil for four more years, and McGovern himself seems too fuzzy-minded, he's not tough and mean enough for the job. Above all, he's not clear-headed and decisive enough."

Is this all mere impressionism, a concession to brainwashed moods? I fear not. In their concern with the personal qualities of a presidential candidate, the masses of voters are not being merely simple-minded; after all, our presidential system gives enormous power to a single individual and it therefore makes sense to ask what kind of person will be employing that power. Likable and decent as McGovern obviously showed himself to be (I am certain that most voters would have approved his return to the Senate), there was obviously *some* truth to the criticisms. He did tend to substitute moralism for politics; he did show poor judgment in regard to some advisers; he did seem badly ill-informed on some issues; he did fail to handle the Eagleton affair with sufficient firmness and dispatch.

Why then, it may be asked, did not negative feelings about Nixon weigh as heavily? For one major reason, I would say. Nixon did not present himself as an innovator, Nixon did not raise anxieties concerning change, experiment, and risk. The electorate was not very eager, as a whole, for social change, but it was determined not to go along with social change as proposed by a man in whose capacities and strength it had little faith.

That such impressions played a significant role can be seen in one simple fact: Nixon could not pull along many Republicans into congressional office, despite the magnitude of his victory. The general purport of the presidential vote was not for a turn to the Right (or, of course, the Left); it was primarily a vote of no-confidence in McGovern.

II

NEVERTHELESS, McGovern was the candidate expressing the progressive sentiments and impulses of the country. Perhaps it would have been better to have had another candidate, but he turned out to be McGovern. And despite his crushing defeat, there were some strongly positive elements in the campaign.

Whole new strata of the population became involved in politics—thousands of young people, students, professionals. The election shows that a Democratic victory is not yet possible if such people take control, but it also shows that victory is equally impossible if they are driven away or humiliated. The expectation fondly nurtured among Democratic professionals and Meanyite labor people that these newly aroused professional and middle-class people will simply fade away, leaving the political arena to the old pros and their young employees, is almost certainly mistaken. If that were to happen, it would be a tragedy. But it would not be a tragedy if the McGovern people ceded some of their narrowly based power in the Democratic party, recognizing that a crushing defeat requires some concessions.

However hesitantly and clumsily, major social and economic issues were raised by McGovern and these are going to be with us in the coming decades. The idea of tax reform, the idea of welfare reform, the idea of a redistribution of income—these are urgent matters. Such issues will not die, nor will four more years of Nixonism dissolve them. They will be the kinds of issues that a Kennedy-style candidate will have to raise in 1976, and the job of doing that will have been made just a little easier by the fact that McGovern had already begun to raise them in 1972.

There was another positive factor in the campaign. The trade unions did not just meekly follow George Meany's directive. About a third of the unions—the UAW, the Amalgamated, the AFSCM, the ILGWU, the machinists—took an independent initiative and supported McGovern. Within the steel union there were considerable currents of opposition to Abel's "neutrality." What this signifies is that the unquestioned hegemony of the Meany leadership has at least been chipped away, and that in the future the labor movement may show itself open to the conflicting currents of opinion and attitude to which the rest of society is susceptible. Surely, that is a possibility of major significance.

Still another positive factor: there were congressional districts and senatorial races in which the McGovernite "kids" worked harmoniously with progressive trade unionists, stressing the hard economic issues that make sense to blue-

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collar voters, and thereby helping elect men to Congress like Studds in Massachusetts, Mezvinsky in Iowa, Clark in Iowa, Haskell in Colorado, and Abourezk in South Dakota. These limited but significant victories presage the kind of cooperation that should be sustained and extended.

III

THE IMMEDIATE TASK for the democratic and liberal-left is the binding of wounds, the defense of morale, and the sober consideration of past mistakes and future possibilities.

That mistakes were made is clear enough. Why wasn't it possible for the unions that supported McGovern to prod him into articulating the fundamental economic issues more sharply and dramatically? Isn't it necessary to reconsider the convention rules McGovern persuaded the Democrats to accept, but to reconsider them in such a way that, while correcting the bias the nominating convention revealed, it will not return the conventions to the hands of the old pols? There will be dozens of other, related questions.

One hopes that in the coming months unionists, intellectuals, political activists, leaders of minority groups will get together in the various cities, quietly consider their position, and see if plans for political recovery can't be effected. We have nothing in common with those editorial and academic pseudoproletarians who snarl at the "New Class" as if its concern with such issues as Vietnam and ecology were a plot to take the bread out of the mouths of union members; but clearly the abiding question is how to reestablish some relations, if not of cordiality, then at least of cooperation with people who accepted the socioeconomic attack on Nixonism yet refused to support McGovern. I have no illusion that this is going to be easy—and it won't be made easier by the probable inclination of the volunteer and paid spokesmen for George Meany to see 1972 as a total vindication of their position. (Some vindication: they helped get themselves four more years of Nixon!) Yet steps in this direction have to be taken. They can best be taken, however, if the unionists who supported McGovern hold together in a loose sort of alliance, thereby providing the basis for negotiation, bargaining, discussion.

Other tasks are intellectual-political. One thing that struck me in the capaign was the inability of McGovern to put forward a clear and simple series of planks for socioeconomic change. Nor was this inability confined to him; none of the other proposed Democratic candidates could do any better when it came to *specific* proposals. The reasons for this I tried to suggest in the last DISSENT: that in this stage of the development of the welfare state we do not have as clearly formulated an idea of immediate socioeconomic proposals as labor and liberal people had, say, just before the New Deal. We have a mounting awareness of the problems, how to analyze and describe them, but not yet those crystallized proposals—if you will, the slogans—that politics requires. This seems a job that groups like ADA could undertake.

There are more fundamental tasks. One detects a desire in certain intellectual or semi-intellectual circles to be done with the nagging problems of the last decade—enough nail-biting over Mylai and the moral issues of the Vietnam war, enough worrying over such matters as amnesty and civil disobedience, let's get on with the business of preparing for 1976. Now there may be some situations in which such stances are required, as a need of practical politics; but it would be unfortunate, indeed inconceivable, that in our intellectual life we should simply dismiss, say, the whole problem of Vietnam out of psychic weariness or pragmatic calculation. The task of moral examination, which is something different from striking moralistic poses, has to continue.

For those of us in the intellectual world, there remains the task of criticism, both popular and serious criticism of the new trend toward conservatism which the Administration embodies, which the election can be seen as in part sustaining, and which is now gaining a certain amount of intellectual respectability.

IV

I HAVE BEEN toying with the idea that the basic direction of American intellectual life since World War II has been toward conservatism and that the recent upsurge of New Left sentiment—now almost invisible—will prove

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to be a mere interruption of this basic direction. It's not anything one can yet prove or disprove, but it may serve as a useful take-off point for the next few years.

Anyone observing intellectual life in America with an eye that could penetrate the inanities of the mass media should have noticed that slowly the conservatives have been gaining in confidence and support. Some signs of this are obvious enough: the growing influence of the *Public Interest,* which has become a center of sophisticated conservatism, and the spread of similar ideas into the pages of *Commentary.* We are dealing here with talented people who have developed a rationale for, in effect, stopping short at the point that the welfare state has reached: the "limits of social policy" are argued, often with some pertinence, as a reason for hesitating before or opposing further large-scale programs of change. These are matters of some complexity, and we shall be returning to them in future issues of DISSENT.

But, of course, it would be naive to suppose that intellectual trends, either on the Right or the Left, take place apart from larger developments of the society. The growing influence of writers like Irving Kristol and Robert Nisbet, Edward Shils and Daniel Moynihan has *some* relation to the political success of Nixonism; it is partly a domestic analogue to the ideology of Kissinger in foreign affairs. And the rise of this new conservatism in the intellectual world was demonstrated by a series of public advertisements for Nixon bearing the names of a good many well-known and some distinguished people.

There were many different levels of response. One kind was represented by a peculiarly nasty attack that Lewis Feuer wrote on McGovern in the *National Review*—the kind of piece, filtering gossip from the *Village Voice,* that makes one feel that some people retain the psychology of fanaticism, regardless of which pole of the political spectrum they may occupy at a given moment. And then there was the "Open Letter to George McGovern," in which Sidney Hook came out for "the lesser evil"—that is, for Nixon. That the author of *From Hegel to Marx* should have found it in his heart to vote for the president who had proposed sending Carswell and Haynsworth to the Supreme Court is his affair; but what I, for one, found peculiarly irritating is that in doing so he described himself as a "comrade-in-arms" of Norman Thomas. Now, in his long career Norman Thomas had many "comrades-in-arms," including a good number who dropped his arms. But might it not have been in better taste for Professor Hook—who surely knew how fiercely Norman Thomas opposed the Vietnam war and how desperately he gave the last years of his life to fighting it—to have spoken just for himself, Professor Hook, and left Norman Thomas alone? I think that whatever Norman Thomas might have done had he lived to 1972 he would not have supported Nixon, but I cannot, in the nature of things, be sure of this. It is better to speak for oneself and not invoke the names of those whom death has rendered defenseless.

And then there was the remarkable advertisement of the intellectuals who came out for Nixon in the name of "prudence," which I take to be a popular translation of "the limits of social policy" argument. Prudence indeed! Carswell, Mylai, Watergate, Haiphong, busing, all tokens of prudence.

What a paltry, small-spirited politics is being nurtured by the Party of Prudence, the camp of the Benign Neglectors! Yet, in a sense, we should welcome their appearance. For the struggle we had to wage in the late '60s against the miasmic fantasies of the New Left were really diversionary, an unavoidable waste of time. There was no intellectual profit to be had from that struggle, it was only a matter of survival and hygiene. The true issues in contemporary society are not the disputes between people like ourselves and the Jerry Rubins or even the Herbert Marcuses. No; the true choices in modern society are between the tories and the social democrats, between what the *Public Interest* represents and what the liberal-left represents. Now that the New Left bubble has burst, now that the conservative intellectuals have begun to rally, the serious debate can begin.

As for ourselves: we remain democratic radicals. We fought against the New Left not because it was radical but because it was stupidly or self-defeatingly or undemocratically "radical." We believe that fundamentally capitalism, even with its desirable modulations, remains an unjust society. We believe that the kinds of changes that the McGovern campaign started to propose in 1972 must be fought for into and

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beyond 1976. The grave problems that beset our society will persist; they will not be dissolved by Nixon's meeching rhetoric or by sophisticated intellectual apologia. The hopes, the energies, the needs of this country still point toward large-scale social change, social innovation, social reform.

And we propose to contribute whatever little we can toward that end. □

Stanley Plastrik

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

Known for the time being as the "Coalition of Black Trade Unionists," a new organization has been launched of black trade union leaders and members. It may turn out to be of major significance both in the American labor movement and the black struggle for social and economic equality.

This movement had its origin in the McGovern campaign, but its plans go beyond it. According to William Lucy, secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL–CIO (AFSCME), who is a spokesman for the new group, the McGovern campaign served merely as its "catalyst." A call for its organization arose out of a meeting attended by 1,200 black trade unionists in Chicago last September. Hundreds of delegates from UAW locals, building trades unions, the AFSCME, and dozens of other national unions decided to set up a continuing movement.

In our interview, Mr. Lucy stressed that the group does not see itself as another "protest" or black nationalist movement. Nor does it have the least interest in setting up anything at all rival or "dual" to the unions. It considers itself an organic part of the union movement, and it plans to operate fully within that framework; it conceives of labor as a major force for social change in America.

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists aims:
to conduct campaigns to organize nonunion black workers (it is estimated there are some 8 million in the country);
to help in the organization of the poor in black communities;
to support actions in opposition to the Vietnam war;
to back legislation favorable to federal revenue-sharing programs that will bolster social services in black communities;
to provide a forum for blacks concerning their special problems within unions;
and perhaps most impressive, to act as a bridge between the organized labor movement and the black communities where hostility to unions is often high.

WILLIAM LUCY, a tall and slender man with a good deal of poise, was especially insistent about the fraternal attitude of the Coalition toward the trade union movement. He pointed out that the people the Coalition will mobilize are at the bottom of the social ladder, among those treated with particular callousness by the present Administration; hence, it is natural that black unionists are anti-Nixon. The AFL–CIO "neutrality" on the elections contradicted the needs of black workers and therefore had to be opposed.

A five-man steering committee, selected at the Chicago gathering, is at work preparing a constitution to formalize the new Coalition and to issue a statement of intent. Lucy hopes the Coalition will bring together the experienced organizers of the labor movement with the inexperienced but enthusiastic volunteers of the communities, thus achieving a unity hitherto unknown among blacks.

The goals sought by this united movement will be jobs on the union level plus a further opening up of the construction trades to black and minority membership, and improved services on the community level. So far, the movement for jobs has concentrated on the building

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trades. This was not a tactical error because these unions wield an influence far beyond their actual numbers and because it was necessary to fight against what Lucy calls the "Building Trades Syndrome." However, the struggle for minority and black jobs must be broadened as we shift to a "service economy." The Coalition will try to explain this in the community. The link between the unions and the future of the inner city has never been clearer.

When questioned about the role of the A. Philip Randolph Institute and its leader, Bayard Rustin, Mr. Lucy expressed regret that the Institute's reaction to the Coalition had been negative and apparently in accord with the viewpoint of the top AFL–CIO leadership, which considers this movement unnecessary and perhaps even disruptive. He felt that the Institute had an important educational function to perform—registering union voters, conducting workshops in union policies, training courses, etc.—but that it was in danger of becoming counterproductive because of its unqualified defense of the status quo in the unions.

At this stage, the Coalition of Black Unionists is a highly promising development; it might turn out to be one of the few constructive results of the dismal election we have just been through. □

Max Shachtman

1904–1972

Socialist

Franklyn S. Haiman

The First Amendment and the Nixon Court

The United States Supreme Court, pushed to the Right by the four appointments of President Nixon, ended its 1971–72 term last June with a flurry of opinions that did not bode well for the freedom of speech and press clause of our Bill of Rights. Further retreat from the expansive interpretations of the First Amendment that have prevailed since the 1930s appear almost inevitable by the end of the Court's current term.

The decisions and opinions on which these forebodings are based were but straws in the wind. Almost none of them, by themselves, were unqualifiedly regressive. For each, some plausible justification was invoked. Indeed, to be completely fair, there were even two or three decisions handed down by the 1972 Nixon Court that could be said to have followed the liberal tendencies of the past. The new justices are cautious men and not likely to move sharply in new directions. Rather, the likelihood is that they will slowly gnaw away at past gains while trying to make it appear that precedent is being respected.

The best example was a decision handed down on June 22, 1972, in which the four Nixon appointees, Chief Justice Warren Burger and Justices Harry Blackmun, Lewis Powell, and William Rehnquist—joined, as they generally are, by Justice Byron White—reversed a ruling of the lower courts that had permitted the distribution of antiwar leaflets in the malls of a Portland, Oregon, shopping center (*Lloyd Corporation* v. *Tanner*). Just four years earlier, in the first shopping center case to reach the Supreme Court (*Amalgamated Food Employees* v. *Logan Valley Plaza*), it seemed that the justices had put an end to prohibitions against the exercise of free speech in the open areas of privately owned shopping centers. The 1968 Court had reasoned that the size and function of shopping centers, even though

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privately owned, were such that, like company towns of an earlier day (*Marsh* v. *Alabama*, 1946), they constituted a natural public forum where the communication of controversial ideas had to be allowed. The new Court majority has returned us to the pre-1968 days when no one knew for sure what his free speech rights in a shopping center were, and when many a dissenter was unceremoniously bounced from their grounds.

Justice Powell, writing the majority opinion for the Court, insisted that he and his colleagues were *not* revoking the 1968 Logan Valley decision. Rather, he said, since the earlier case involved a group of picketers engaged in a labor dispute with a grocery store in the shopping center, whose message could not very well be communicated at any other location, their right to picket had to be permitted. The huge Lloyd Corporation center in Portland, however, is partially interlaced with public streets and sidewalks where, said the Court, the leaflets could have been handed out without invading private property. Also influencing the Court's judgment was their view that the protest in the Logan Valley case "was related to the shopping center's operations," whereas the leaflet in *Lloyd* v. *Tanner* was "directed to all members of the public" and could have been passed out "on any public street, on any public sidewalk, in any public park, or in any public building in the city of Portland."

Justice Thurgood Marshall, who had written the Logan Valley opinion for the Supreme Court, vigorously dissented from the *Lloyd* v. *Tanner* decision, joined by Justices William Douglas, William Brennan, and Potter Stewart. Said Justice Marshall:

> The vote in Logan Valley was 6–3, and that decision is only four years old. But, I am aware that the composition of this Court has radically changed in four years. The fact remains that Logan Valley is binding unless and until it is over-ruled. There is no valid distinction between that case and this one, and, therefore, the results in both cases should be the same.

The four-man minority in *Lloyd* v. *Tanner* raised their voices in joint protest against two other end-of-term First Amendment decisions by the Nixon-White majority, one on June 26, 1972, in the widely publicized Army spying case, and the other on June 29, 1972, in a package of cases involving the claimed right of newspaper reporters to maintain the confidentiality of their sources in the face of grand jury investigations. The first of these cases had been initiated by the American Civil Liberties Union, on behalf of Arlo Tatum and other plaintiffs. In the wake of revelations that Army intelligence units had been maintaining extensive surveillance over peace groups and other dissenters, these plaintiffs alleged that such activities created a chilling effect on the exercise of their rights of freedom of speech and association. The government sought to have the case dismissed without a hearing, and secured an order to that effect from a federal district judge. The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia reversed that decision and ordered hearings to proceed. It was this order of the Court of Appeals that the U.S. Supreme Court majority overturned by a 5–4 vote on June 26 (*Tatum* v. *Laird*).

Once again, as in the shopping center decision, the Court majority, speaking this time through Chief Justice Burger, attempted to make it appear that they were not turning their backs on earlier precedents. Reviewing the decisions in which the Supreme Court, during the 1960s, had struck down government actions which were found to constitute a "chilling effect" on the exercise of First Amendment rights, the Chief Justice said:

> In none of these cases, however, did the chilling effect arise merely from the individual's knowledge that a government agency was engaged in certain activities or from the individual's concomitant fear that . . . the agency might in the future take some *other* and additional action detrimental to the individual. Rather, in each of these cases . . . the complainant was either presently or prospectively subject to the regulations, proscriptions, or compulsions that he was challenging.

The Chief Justice went on to state that the majority intimate "no view with respect to the propriety or desirability . . . of the challenged activities of the Department of the Army," but that they do not believe the courts should intervene until a plaintiff can show some genuine "injury."

Justice Douglas, writing one of the dissents, saw the situation rather differently:

> This case is a cancer in our body politic. It is a measure of the disease which afflicts us. Army

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surveillance, like Army regimentation, is at war with the principles of the First Amendment. Those who already walk submissively will say there is no cause for alarm. But submissiveness is not our heritage. The Constitution was designed to keep government off the backs of the people. . . . There can be no influence more paralyzing of that objective than army surveillance.

THE THREE CASES involving a journalist's right to withhold information from a grand jury had met with varying fates in the lower courts. In *Branzburg* v. *Hayes,* a *Louisville Courier-Journal* reporter had been ordered by the Kentucky Court of Appeals to identify for the Jefferson County grand jury some unnamed individuals whose use of marijuana he had described in two newspaper articles. A second case, *In the Matter of Paul Pappas,* dealt with a television newsman-photographer who had gained access to a Black Panther party headquarters in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on condition that he not disclose anything that he saw or heard there other than the events of an anticipated police raid. The supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruled that Pappas had no constitutional right to refuse to divulge to the Bristol County grand jury what he had seen or heard in the Panther headquarters that might be relevant to the criminal investigation in which they were engaged.

In *United States* v. *Caldwell,* the United States 9th Circuit Court of Appeals showed greater concern for the First Amendment implications of this issue than did the Kentucky and Massachusetts courts. In a groundbreaking decision, the 9th Circuit held that Earl Caldwell, a black reporter for the *New York Times* in San Francisco, did *not* have to divulge to a federal grand jury information he had obtained about the Black Panther party through confidential interviews with their leaders *unless* the government could show a compelling and overriding national interest in requiring Caldwell's testimony, and that this interest could not be served by any alternative means of obtaining the information.

On June 29, the Nixon-White majority affirmed the decisions of the Kentucky and Massachusetts courts and reversed the decision of its 9th Circuit Court. Justice White, writing for the Supreme Court, first paid his lip-service to the First Amendment:

We do not question the significance of free speech, free press or assembly to the country's welfare. . . . without some protection for seeking out the news, freedom of the press could be eviscerated.

But he went on:

It is clear that the First Amendment does not invalidate every incidental burdening of the press that may result from the enforcement of civil or criminal statutes of general applicability.

Reporters, like the average citizen, have an obligation, said the Court, to respond to grand jury subpoenas.

Justice Douglas, in dissent, noted:

Forcing a reporter before a grand jury will have two retarding effects upon the ear and the pen of the press. Fear of exposure will cause dissidents to communicate less openly to trusted reporters. And, fear of accountability will cause editors and critics to write with more restrained pens.

Justice Stewart, writing for himself and Justices Brennan and Marshall, summed up the frustrations of the Branzburg-Pappas-Caldwell minority in these words:

The Court's crabbed view of the First Amendment reflects a disturbing insensitivity to the critical role of an independent press in our society. . . .

Justice Stewart is a moderate man who was appointed to the Supreme Court by President Eisenhower and who has pursued a highly independent course. In cases involving freedom of speech he has been on the nonrestrictive side more often than not. As though it were too much for him, however, to stand firm with the minority in all of the end-of-term decisions, and despite his strong language about the Nixon-White majority's "crabbed view of the First Amendment," he joined with that majority on June 29 to concur in what was probably the most astonishing and regressive of all the Court's June opinions. By a vote of 6–3, the Court ruled that the Attorney General did not violate the Constitution in refusing to allow a visa to be issued to Ernest Mandel, a Belgian Marxist who had been invited to the United States to speak at several of our major universities (*Kleindienst* v. *Mandel*).

Dr. Mandel had been admitted for a visit to the United States in 1962 as a working journal-

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ist and again in 1968 as a visiting speaker at a number of universities. This had happened despite a constitutionally dubious provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which bars from entry to the country those who advocate or publish "the economic, international and governmental doctrines of world communism." The law also empowers the Attorney General to waive that prohibition in individual cases, and earlier attorneys general had sensibly seen fit to do so for Dr. Mandel. Attorney General John Mitchell, however, chose not to follow suit, even though that course had been recommended to him by Secretary of State William Rogers.

Upholding the Attorney General's action, Justice Blackmun took his turn at speaking for the Nixon Court. Again the majority paid their lip service to past precedent by conceding that those who had invited Dr. Mandel to speak in the United States had a First Amendment right "to receive information and ideas," a right that admittedly may have been diminished by the government's refusal to issue a visa. But, continued Justice Blackmun, "Recognition that First Amendment rights are implicated . . . is not dispositive of our inquiry."

No, indeed. For so great is the Nixon Court's deference to the other branches of government that the justices could not bring themselves to question the "plenary power" of the Congress to enact legislation which bars any persons it wishes to bar from the country, nor of the power of the Executive to implement such a congressional mandate. "We hold," concluded the Court's opinion in *Kleindienst* v. *Mandel*, "that when the Executive exercises this power . . . on the basis of a facially legitimate and bona fide reason, the courts will neither look behind the exercise of that discretion, nor test it by balancing its justification against First Amendment interests. . . ."

Justice Marshall again eloquently expressed dismay at the direction in which this decision took the Supreme Court:

> I . . . am stunned to learn that a country with our proud heritage has refused Dr. Mandel temporary admission. . . . No citation is given for this kind of unprecedented deference to the Executive, nor can I imagine (nor am I told) the slightest justification . . . in the Government's view this case is no different from a long line of cases holding that the power to exclude aliens is left exclusively to the "political" branches of Government, Congress, and the Executive. . . . They include such mile stones as the Chinese Exclusion case . . . in which this Court upheld the Government's power to exclude and expel Chinese aliens from our midst. . . . Nothing is served . . . by Mandel's exclusion. In blocking his admission, the Government has departed from the basic traditions of our country, its fearless acceptance of free discussion.

Nevertheless, the Supreme Court did manage to hand down two decisions on June 26, both unanimously, which reinforced the more expansive earlier interpretations of free speech.

The first of these dealt with the refusal of the president of Central Connecticut State College to grant official recognition as a campus organization to a local chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society. Finding the college president's action in violation of the First Amendment, the Court, speaking through Justice Powell, forcefully reiterated some relatively recently established free speech doctrine:

> At the outset we note that colleges and universities are not immune from the sweep of the First Amendment. . . . The college classroom with its surrounding environs is peculiarly the "marketplace of ideas" and we break no new ground in re-affirming the nation's dedication to safeguarding academic freedom. . . . Among the rights protected by the First Amendment is the right of individuals to associate to further their personal beliefs. . . . There can be no doubt that denial of official recognition, without justification, to college organizations burdens or abridges that associational right (*Healy* v. *James*).

As if unable to allow the Court even this one vigorous stand in defense of the First Amendment without spoiling it in some way, Justice Rehnquist, concurring in the final decision, felt it necessary to disassociate himself from the language of Justice Powell's opinion. Speaking separately, he sought to make perfectly clear that despite this particular decision of the Court, as a general principle, "The government as employer or school administrator may impose upon employees and students reasonable regulations that would be impermissible if imposed by the government upon all citizens."

Justice Rehnquist notwithstanding, *Healy* v. *James* was the Nixon Court's finest moment in an otherwise dreary performance vis-à-vis

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the First Amendment. Its other decent moment came in its decision in Chicago *Police Department* v. *Mosley*. This case involved a Chicago city ordinance that makes it illegal to picket or demonstrate within 150 feet of any school building during school hours, though an exception is made for picketing in connection with a labor dispute. Without addressing itself directly to the limitations on freedom of speech inherent in the ordinance, a unanimous Court found that the distinction between labor picketing and other peaceful picketing violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Although little enough was said in this opinion about the free speech clause of the First Amendment, Chief Justice Burger felt called upon to enter a demurrer:

> I join the Court's opinion but with the reservation that some of the language used in the discussion of the First Amendment could, if read out of context, be misleading. Numerous holdings of this Court attest to the fact that the First Amendment does not literally mean that we "are guaranteed the right to express any thought, free from government censorship." This statement is subject to some qualifications. . . .

We can apparently depend upon the Chief Justice not to let us forget any of those qualifications!

THE ONLY HAPPY THING one can say about how the First Amendment fared in 1972 is that the damage was probably slight by comparison to what we may face by the end of June of 1973. For the Court carried over until its present term a whole battery of cases that had been accumulating on its docket dealing with various phases of the question of obscenity and of the extent to which the communication of sexual material (e.g., the film *I Am Curious Yellow*) is protected by the freedom of speech clause of the Bill of Rights. It appears to be the Court's intention to deal with these cases as a group, and that could mean some major new pronouncements on this politically explosive and deeply significant free speech issue, with Mr. Nixon's appointees having their first opportunity to address themselves to the matter. There is no reason whatsoever to believe that any of the four is likely to come down on the nonrestrictive side of such a question, and much reason to fear that they will want to draw narrower boundaries around permitted speech than have been drawn during the last decade. Judging by past performances on this topic, they will have an ally in Justice White and an opponent in Justice Stewart. So, once again, we may have a series of 5–4 decisions, which will further erode the First Amendment gains that have steadily been made for nearly half a century □

Nissim Rejwan

Who Is a Palestinian?

Tel Aviv

Winning a war can prove as taxing as losing one. The swift 1967 Israeli conquest of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—all that had remained of Palestinian non-Israeli territory after the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948—placed Israel into the position of a man who has just managed to catch a bear. After 18 years of subjugation and dispersion, the Arabs of Palestine, most of whom had been living in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, now were becoming somewhat of an internal Israeli problem. For the Six-Day War had brought some 1.5 million Palestinian Arabs under various kinds of Israeli rule.

At the time few people seemed to grasp what was happening. The thrill of a decisive victory, the subsequent economic boom, and the new better-paying and more prestigious jobs to which the influx of a huge non-Jewish proletariat had released Jewish workers—all these factors tended to relegate the crucial issue to the background. "Arab labor" everywhere was visibly replacing unskilled "Jewish labor"—for 50,000 largely unskilled Arab laborers from

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the West Bank and the Gaza Strip now were working in Israel. Now that the process of stabilization of the present state of affairs seemed irreversible, many viewed it a fearful prospect to envision the State of Israel with a non-Jewish minority of some 35 percent of the population. Considering the Arabs' very high birth rate, even a sizable Jewish immigration in the coming decades would leave the country with a "national minority" of a size only slightly smaller than the Jewish majority.

Nor is there much anyone can do about it, since along with the desire to remain a Jewish state, Israel also seeks to establish "secure and defensible borders" entailing large-scale territorial changes. That these two aims may prove well-nigh irreconcilable was illustrated in a report published in the well-informed Tel Aviv labor paper *Davar* on August 22, 1972.

This *Davar* report stated that certain high-level official circles in Jerusalem were beginning to feel the need for the decision to set up a number of Jewish settlements in the areas of Jerusalem, Hebron, Raphiah, and the Gaza Strip. These circles, the report added, did not see much point in asking the U.S. Administration publicly to disown the Rogers Plan of December 1969 that envisages only "minor rectifications" of the pre-1967 borders—but they suggested instead that Israel should hasten to establish "permanent settlement facts" aimed at invalidating the terms of that Plan.

The *Davar* report was neither denied nor confirmed by the authorities concerned, and the next day the independent daily *Haaretz* carried an editorial that flatly rejected both the proposal and the tactics. *Haaretz* maintained that the reported decisions—which the paper assumed had already been taken—had resulted from the fact that Washington was not likely either to dissociate itself from the Rogers Plan or to engage in a controversy with Jerusalem before the U.S. presidential elections. *Haaretz* rejected the proposed settlement plans for two reasons: First, these plans would show the world that Israel is not sincere in saying she is willing to enter peace negotiations "without any prior conditions." Second, they would involve a gradual increase in the number of Arabs within Israeli borders. These Arabs would willy-nilly find a way to express their presence in political terms even if Israel were to decide to disenfranchise them.

Israel's relation to the "administered areas" is not merely a diplomatic one: it involves her whole future. On the same day that *Haaretz* carried this editorial, Israeli newspapers reported a speech by Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon in which he expressed apprehension about the prospect of "Arab labor replacing Jewish labor in manual occupations"—with all its concomitant social discontents and inequalities. Though not specified as such, Allon's statement came as a rejoinder to Moshe Dayan's policy of "integration" of the two economies. Dayan's approach is far from clear—though he has always given the impression that his policy of coexistence and economic integration with the administered territories stops short only of formal annexation. But Dayan also is aware that his own party—Israel's Labor party—is becoming a focal point of opposition to a "creeping expansionism." This accounts for the fact that, while attending a Party policy discussion at Beit Berl on July 29, Dayan urged that the government draw up a clear policy on Arabs under Israeli rule—pointing out that any political, social, or economic discussion that overlooks the fact that 1.35 million Arabs now live under Israeli rule is divorced from reality.

The thrust of the argument against Dayan's "integrationist" policy has been mainly ideological, based on the concept of Israel as a Jewish state. The most influential opponents of Dayan's policy have been Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir and Foreign Minister Abba Eban. Sapir—in the words of a *Jerusalem Post* commentator—"wants a production-oriented Western-style economy." Originally, Sapir had wanted the Green Line border (the cease-fire border of 1948) between Israel and the territories to become a customs barrier. But, to quote again from the *Jerusalem Post,*

> the sheer impossibility of getting it policed and the vision of the smuggling that would go on may have caused him to abandon the idea. But he still wants the border, some border, to keep the Jewish State separate and secure. . . . There would be economic ties, he believes—without freedom for labour to seek jobs, apparently.

Mr. Eban has also been worried about demography. By 1990, he argues, Israel will have an Arab minority of 43 percent within the present boundaries—but within the Green Line

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borders this minority will comprise only 20 percent. (The pre-1967 percentage was 12 percent —with 2.6 million Jews and 452,000 Arabs.) Eban is also reported to have made the pessimistic observation that even a 40 percent Arab minority would really be a majority, since the 60 percent Jewish majority would be deadlocked in internal divisions. Either way, a substantial section of the Labor party's leadership seems now to advocate a return to the pre-1967 boundaries—with certain changes—because of what they see as the impossibility of building a Jewish state with so large an Arab minority.

NEITHER Sapir nor Eban—nor Premier Golda Meir, who once declared that she did not want the occupied areas to become part of Israel because she did not want to find herself regretting the birth of an Arab baby—seems to give much thought to the ultimate political fate of the West Bank and Gaza Strip inhabitants, the 1 million Palestinians now living under Israeli rule. One Labor party personality, however, has made it his business to worry about just that subject—and also about such topics as Zionism, the future shape of Israeli society, and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Arye Eliav—member of the Knesset (parliament), former Labor party secretary-general and former deputy minister of Immigrant Absorption—believes that it is impossible to discuss any of these subjects in isolation. In a book published last month in Tel Aviv—*Eretz Hatzvi*, "The Splendid Land: An Evaluation of the Prospects before Israel"—Eliav presents three main goals for Israel:

(1) Concentrating a majority of the Jewish people in its homeland.
(2) Creating a Jewish society based on equality, social justice, and freedom.
(3) Peace with the Arabs.

For Eliav, these three goals are as one. To put any of them aside would be to make nonsense of Zionism. "We have to realize," he writes, "that the social values we craved are now mingled inextricably with the Palestinian-Arab problem and with the problem of the territories."

Convinced that the key to Israel's future lies in making peace with the Arabs—and first and foremost with the Palestinians—Eliav argues that Israel should issue a declaration that she is prepared to return to the Palestinian Arabs the bulk of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which, combined with Transjordan, will provide them with their own sovereign and independent state.

Eliav takes strong exception to the current argument that "there is no one to talk with." In an interview he relates that he had reached his conclusion regarding the existence of the Palestinian people and the need for Israel to come to terms with them back in 1968. "I spent six months touring the territories, three months in the West Bank territory and three in the Gaza Strip, talking to the most articulate spokesmen of the population, including those in the refugee camps." Going even further, Eliav counters the there-is-no-one-to-talk-with argument by saying: It is likely that just because we do not say clear things on the Palestinian problem, and befog the issue of the territories, there is no one to talk with. If we began to talk of principles among ourselves we would evoke a discussion among the Arabs and, later, between them and ourselves.

Nor does Eliav have much respect for the arguments advanced by Premier Meir, among others, that there is no such thing as a Palestinian people. He criticizes the government for failing to provide a clear-cut answer as to the solutions it proposes for those Palestinian Arabs living under Israeli rule. "Israel has not answered the questions that bother these Palestinians: 'What is our fate?' 'What national options are open to us?' 'What does Israel want of us?' "

THE DEFEATS the Arabs have suffered in Palestine since 1948, the refugee problem, the strengthening of the Jewish state, and the political-military escalation that terminated in the Six-Day War—all these have created deep wounds in the Arab psyche. But while Eliav shows a measure of understanding vis-à-vis their plight, he minces no words about what he calls their "Crusaders complex." The Arabs, he writes, now tend to view the present events in the context of "a Crusaders scenario"—which implies that, like the Christians of the 11th and 12th centuries who invaded Palestine and ruled it for a considerable time, the Jews will in turn be defeated by a new Salah ed-Din.

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This may take 100 or 200 years, but in the end it must come.

Eliav finds no difficulty in refuting this notion. He asks, first, who knows what the world —and particularly the Middle East—will be like in 100 or 200 years? Second, while the Crusaders had somewhere to go, neither the Jewish immigrants nor their Israeli-born offspring have a place "to go back to." And, last, while the defeat of the Zionists would have been conceivable 100 years ago by what were then conventional weapons, now and in the future, in such a total war, there would be neither victors nor vanquished, only a heap of dust.

Eliav admits that the subject of the Palestinians—"Who are they? Do they even exist? Where are they heading? What is our attitude toward them?"—is emotionally and politically explosive:

> It is difficult, nay impossible, for us to be objective about this problem. . . . He who writes or talks about the problem and does not try to sweep it under the carpet ("there is no such a problem," "there *are* no Palestinians," "the problem will take care of itself," and so on) is seen by some Jews as a man inhabited by a *dybbuk* [a spirit]—or even worse than that, as an enemy of Israel. . . .
>
> We are duty-bound to live with this problem, with these Palestinian Arabs. They now live in our midst and around our borders. Responsibility for the lives and fortunes of over a million of them is now ours. . . . Even should we reach, through some miracle, either interim or permanent settlements with the Arab states to the south, the north, and the east of us, the problem of the Palestinians would still not be solved. We shall not reach real peace, and the Israeli-Arab conflict will not be resolved, unless we find, together with them, a solution to their problem—which is ours as well.

In its essence, Eliav's thesis is very simple. The problem of the Arabs of Palestine is at the root of the Israeli-Arab conflict. To ignore it would be of no avail, since the tragedy is of a scope and a volume that no one can dismiss. And the Jews—who have never let the world forget *their* problem or ignore *their* tragedy—are the last people in the world who should or could try to do so.

Eliav reaches the conclusion that the Palestinians, with half of them reduced to being refugees and scattered across the Arab world, have shown that they cannot be "absorbed" in Arab lands. He seems to suggest that the failure of the Palestinians to set up a state of their own in what remained of Palestine after the War of 1948 was not their fault. They were simply unable to do so: the Egyptians occupied the Gaza Strip and the Jordanians annexed the West Bank, while a minority of the Palestinians remained within Israel. The only exception to this rule was the Kingdom of Jordan, which could not help absorbing the Palestinians living within its boundaries. Indeed, had things been allowed to take their course, Jordan would eventually have become a Palestinian state; but the activities of the guerrillas and the war in 1967 again turned the Palestinians into an Israeli problem.

According to Eliav, Israel should issue a declaration saying that she is willing to return to the Palestinians the bulk of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip so that they may establish there, and on the East Bank of the Jordan, an independent, sovereign state of their own. Eliav sharply criticizes the current, and predominant, attitude that Israel ought not to speak of "principles," since "there is no one to speak to anyway." Those Arabs of Palestine, the argument goes, who are willing to speak are afraid to do so, while those who do speak demand the whole of Palestine. Why then should Israel make herself vulnerable by speaking of principles and concessions? Why should she start a domestic controversy to no good purpose? This attitude, Eliav argues, is a fatal error. "We are duty-bound to speak up and say what, in principle, is our wish. After all, our whole enterprise was built on principles; principles came first, action second."

THE moral aspect of the problem agitates Eliav no less than the practical one. He cites with total disapproval the argument advanced by "the pragmatists," who say that the Palestinians living under Israeli rule have nothing to complain about. They have money, they have work, their living standard has risen—in fact they enjoy a better life than their brethren in the neighboring Arab countries. Eliav believes that this sort of argument "has a most terrible echo, which reminds us of our past in the Diaspora where the same things used to be said about the Jews." Without leaving open to the Palestinians what the author calls "a national option"

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—without following the principle of "two people, two states"—the positive work being done by the Israelis in the administered territories loses its moral justification.

Eliav maintains that, even if today "there is no one to talk with," Israel must speak her own truth—"if this is indeed her truth"—and say that she does not need the West Bank or the Gaza Strip in order to settle Jews there—and that she is prepared to see a sovereign Palestinian Arab state set up in the administered areas. Such an "Arab Balfour Declaration" will have a tremendous psychological impact and, in due course, an equally significant practical one.

Eliav admits that such far-reaching steps would take a great deal of courage—and not only in the international arena. First of all, he argues, the Israelis should embark on a campaign of "self-education." Here he shows a rare insight when he writes that, even more than hatred, scorn toward the Arabs is highly dangerous. He points to this paradox: In the past the Arabs scorned the Jews but did not hate them, now they hate the Israelis though they no longer scorn them. The Jews of Israel, however, are beginning to feel scorn toward the Arabs, without hating them:

> We are called upon to combat this ugly manifestation with all our educational means. We are called upon to educate our young generation to understand the Arabs in general and the Palestinian Arabs in particular. . . . Scorn is generally the result of lack of understanding and of ignorance. . . .

Eliav's book has created a stir, precisely because it came from the ranks of the Establishment. Because of the delicacy of the subject and the lack of clarity as to "official" Labor party policy, few party leaders have come out either for or against Eliav's ideas. Histadrut (labor federation) Secretary-General Yitzhak Ben-Aharon was one of these:

> Eliav's book [he said] is close to my heart, and has given voice to the whispers of many. . . . It is original and very daring. I believe that many, many people will be ready to go along with him a good part of the way, if not the whole way. We have to open our minds to arguments—otherwise we are doomed to becoming pragmatic functionaries.

Minister of Communications and Transport Shimon Peres, who recently had spoken out for favoring a "federative arrangement" between Israel and the Palestinians, has now asserted that all talk about "a Palestinian personality" was "a typical Jewish invention." In an interview in the *Jerusalem Post* Peres said, "I think that instead of trying to win a Cabinet seat on the strength of his book, Eliav should go to the Party Convention and see whether he has a majority backing him. I shall take the liberty of saying that the majority that voted for the 'oral doctrine' at the 1969 Convention has grown in the meantime." (This "oral doctrine," approved in '69 at a Labor party Convention, spoke of the Jordan river as Israel's "security border," of a land link to Sharm el-Sheikh, and of the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights as under Israeli control.) In this interview Peres said that Eliav

> wants to produce a kind of "Balfour Declaration of the Palestinians." But I would like to point out the difference between the situation then and what he offers now. In World War One the Jews asked Lord Balfour to make the Declaration. I have yet to hear of any Palestinian putting forward such a request. We are confronted by an entirely different state of affairs. *The Palestinians do not seek Jewish recognition of their entity. They want Israel, which is for them Palestine, and they want all of it.* [Emphasis added.]

The italicized part of Peres's statement refers, of course, to the stand of the Palestinian guerrilla organizations—which, however, neither Israelis nor Palestinians would equate with the stand of *all* the Palestinians. Such equations become possible precisely as a result of actions carried out by an activist minority among the Palestinians and in the absence of any move by "the silent majority." It appears that, as long as the Palestinians remain unable to give a less violent and more systematic expression to their personality, it will continue to be difficult to provide a satisfactory answer to those Israelis who argue that "the Palestinian personality" is "a typical Jewish invention." □

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Czeslaw Milosz

On The Agony Of The West

My principle concern is the unacknowledged, barely conscious premises of my own or anyone else's thinking. Besides faith in universal evolution, this includes an unfavorable appraisal of the direction a country, a society, a civilization is taking. It is somewhat strange to write this while living in the country that has achieved the greatest economic power in history; but, judging by the grimace of rage and contempt emanating from the works of pen, brush, and camera, never before have so many people taken up indictment as a pastime. Although I feel a certain kinship with them, it is precisely that which disposes me toward being a bit mistrustful of myself—for their activities are a mirror in which I can easily see myself.

A conviction of the decadence, the rotting of the West, seems to be a permanent part of the equipment of enlightened and sensitive people for dealing with the horrors accompanying technological progress; at the same time, this conviction is as old as modern art. It is enough here to cite the modern city appearing in Baudelaire as *cité infernale*. However, as soon as we assume that a regression is actually occuring, the question arises—a regression from what, where is that ideal state of equilibrium and vigor for which we are supposed to yearn?

This question has met with the most diverse answers. The first great patron of the dissatisfied was, of course, Rousseau who opposed the views of Hobbes, which were shared by the sober disciples of reason. According to Hobbes man had emerged from primordial savagery, barbarism, the uncontrolled struggle of everyone against everyone. Before Rousseau it hadn't entered anyone's mind to take the legend of the Golden Age literally and to dream about a state of nature without arts or sciences. Admittedly, Rousseau did not recommend a return to the condition of the innocent savage; he chose that state only as a model for consciously cultivated Virtue—the Virtue in whose name so many heads were soon to roll from the guillotine.

Tolstoy, Rousseau's disciple, in many respects outdid his master in the finality of his judgments. Perhaps Berdyaev is right in calling Tolstoy the evil genius of Russia, for the sage of Yasnaya Polyana trained the Russian intelligentsia in the advancing of absolute demands, in what may be called impatience with institutions, hierarchies, gradual improvement, in general with history as the fabric of the intricate interdependence of the better and the worse.

But Tolstoy and Rousseau are just two of many answers. The Romantics were taken by the Middle Ages and from their time on we have lived with the idealized image of an organic, patriarchal civilization held together by the religious fervor of everyone from kings to commoners. Other romantics, called utopian socialists, discovered the panacea for all evil in primitive collective ownership when there had been no concept of private property, and this they tried to revive in their phalansteries. The young Marx came to the con-

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clusion that man not only does not live as he should, but that the conditions in which he finds himself have alienated him from his essence, from his humanity; hence the further conclusion (not altogether a logical one—rather, an act of faith) that somewhere there must be a set of conditions assuring the unity of essence and existence. Marx located that set of conditions in the past, in primitive communism, and in the future, in industrial communism. However, the progress of technology in the course of the 19th century cared little for the plans of visionaries and revolutionaries; there was something automatic in it, and the popularity of science fiction exemplified by the optimistic novels of Jules Verne spoke more to the popular imagination than did angry treatises.

Only when science fiction begins to be laced with anxious forebodings and lends them antiutopian features can one speak of the surfacing of latent currents of despair. Toward the end of his long life, H. G. Wells, till then always faithful to his scientific-humanitarian visions, published a small, despairing book, *Mind at the End of Its Tether*, in which he confessed that he saw little chance for a humanity entangled in its own inventions to survive. His *Mind at the End of Its Tether* is nothing else than Allen Ginsberg's "Moloch whose name is the Mind."

Perhaps the inauguration date of Europe's decadentism was 1886, the year the magazine Le Décadent appeared in Paris. The authors grouped around this magazine declared that they wished not to create but to destroy, for the *hyper-blasée* civilization of the West was dying and could no longer be saved. But the flower of decadentism had only begun to bud. It was revived by various kinds of disintegrating substances, chiefly by the crisis in religion. More or less at the same time the deification of art as the loftiest, sacral activity began to filter from small groups of bohemians to wider circles; no longer by what is communicated but by its very form, art was to be a religion and the artist its priest. Thereafter, more and more people would contribute to the confusion, opposing to a world without gods and a civilization without promise their own cult and arguing fiercely about which of the quickly changing artistic "isms" made the most suitable substitute for the liturgy. A new, enormous field was opened up for dilettantes and idlers, since anyone who had finished high school felt in his heart that he was an artist or at least qualified to hold forth on art.

For me there is no doubt that my mind imbibed all the possible ingredients of despair from the European civilization in which I grew up. My childhood coincided with the First World War, thus with the end of an order that had been splendid in the opinion of some, rotten in the opinion of others, but an order. The Russian Revolution soon followed, initiating an era of comparisons: "there-here." And I would say that the 19th century's despondencies, disenchantments, gloomy prophecies, previously pushed aside by the very weight of reality, grew more distinct and crystallized, attacking my maturing mind from all sides. The old romantic yearning for hieratic, priestly-chivalrous societies was reborn in the theses of Oswald Spengler (who had a predecessor in the Russian Nikolai Danilevsky), which saw civilizations as organisms experiencing in turn childhood, maturity, and the senility of old age.

Obviously, the West had already entered the ebb phase of its life forces. From defeated Germany there radiated harsh and scornful tidings of the impasse into which Western man had been thrust by overweening Reason; hope was sought in Oriental sages, Hinduism, Bhuddism. England's young writers—T. E. Hulme, T. S. Eliot—programmatically reverted to the past, seeing in the present only sterility, boredom, a

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wasteland of "hollow men" deprived of religious faith and thus of purpose and meaning in existence.

This doesn't mean that I was reading Spengler or that I knew anything about England. Still, tendencies of that sort were not alien even to Poland where they made their way through the writings of prerevolutionary Russians; and since I knew French, I learned about the invasion of pessimism from the books of fanatics of Cartesian clarity, mainly conservatives who, like Henri Massis (*Défense de l'Occident*) saw the Germans as the breeding ground of the epidemic. At the same time the whole world was hearing about "the decay of capitalism" and its inevitable, fatal agony. Hitler's counterrevolution seemed to corroborate completely such slogans. As for the Second World War, it fulfilled, with plenty to spare, the predictions of the prophets of decline, no matter what their assumptions. Never before in such a short span of time had so many millions of human beings been put to death, never before had the coldly planned destruction of whole peoples had such perfected technical means at its command.

How Western Europe functioned from the day the war ended until today when I write this is a perfect mystery to me, in spite of the fact that I lived there, in France, for ten years, from 1950 to 1960. Insofar as the European spirit hated itself, turned against itself, derided the institutions it had elaborated, it was perhaps masking a painful sense of its own disgrace. This was an orgy, a pandemonium of all the disgust, bitterness, and hangovers I had known from my early youth and which, it would seem, only now have become fully acknowledged, revindicated, and justified with the help of fashionable discourses on *la nausée,* the absurd, alienation. This spirit rejected any "here and now," praising to the skies some "there and sometime"; it was axiomatic that the West was dying. "There" most frequently meant Russia, occasionally some other country where Communists were in power, "sometime" meant the voyage of mankind to the Islands of Happiness after the abolition of the private means of production and the fusing of essence and existence into one.

But while the spirit was spending itself on flight, the body—by the grace of America which for a long time had to keep the European economy in an "iron lung" and revive it artificially—was eating, drinking, buying automobiles and refrigerators. That duality should induce some reflection, for it shakes somewhat the fixed European opinion about the interaction of the spirit and body of a given human community. If only it had been a small group of the chosen, well versed in that pastime best defined by the French word *ricaner,* "to laugh venomously."

No, from poetry and philosophy the mood of impotence linked with sullen buffoonery penetrated to the masses through the novel, the theater, film, and the press. It is not difficult to establish how motifs and forms migrated from elite genres, from abstruse treatises or hermetic poetry which made little sense to the general public, to the media of mass communication. The theater of the absurd brought to the stage that which had been for some time well-known to readers of poetry. The novel diluted and rendered accessible experiments that had at first only been appreciated by the initiated. Film entered into competition with the novel, the language of images lending a sometimes fantastic power to the sense of disgust, and in Fellini and Antonioni, for example, film took themes from philosophers, primarily their angry attacks on (evil) existence cut off from (good) human essence. Someone from another planet wishing to evaluate Western Europe on the basis of what it thought of itself would have to admit that a revolution was approaching there and that at least in renewed mutual slaughter the inhabitants of that part of the earth would find a certain relief. However, it turned out just the other way around and

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what was apparently a poisoning became the agent of affluent stabilization.

America is separated from Europe by the Atlantic, though not so very much. America's technical know-how in recent decades has been devoted to, among other things, aiding the assimilation of European ideas. For, after all, that is what is served by the extraordinary growth of higher education and the production of paperback books, so furious that, as a New York publisher once said to me, they're shoveled into storerooms like coal. This means that 16-year-olds get acquainted with Beckett and Ionesco in their school theater and soon encounter Nietzsche and Marx, Spengler and Sartre, Camus, and all sorts of anti-utopias as well in inexpensive editions. In other words, whatever may be the thoughts of those innumerable advocates of American purity for whom Europe has always been a source only of evil, the myth of decline and decay has to be contagious. I say myth because most obviously there is at work here a certain unity of aura and tone, stronger than truth or untruth. Besides, it would be difficult to separate the European contribution from the American. American by background, T. S. Eliot, now read in the schools, was an exponent of the dark, plaintive tone on both sides of a diminished ocean and was no exception.

A cheerful young giant, a child in the cradle strangling Centaurs, with an ever more splendid future before it: that portrait of America is ultimately mythical too, and we will probably commit no great error in supposing a country like that created by Walt Whitman in *Leaves of Grass* never existed, that it was derived from his imagination, just as was the city-wilderness with an inaccessible center—Balzac's Paris. All the same, the very intoxication with forward movement and space corresponded to the mood of the pioneers and settlers who found reward for their labors in material success. Still, in America, almost from the beginning, almost at the foundations, there can be found the dream of Arcadia, of a harmonious life in concord with Nature, of the self-sufficiency of the individual who is happy and honest only when he takes just as much as he needs from Nature with the aid of his axe and rifle, shunning an ever corrupt society and state. Whitman also glorified this Adam. Thoreau, according to whom the civilized inhabitants of New England bore their lot as men with "quiet desperation," established something of an archetype for American intellectuals, propagating civil disobedience and fleeing to his log cabin on a forest lake. And I, raised on tart and bitter European dishes, am now surrounded by new Thoreaus who differ from their spiritual forebear in that they consider the "quiet desperation" of their millions of fellow citizens to be the result of an increasingly cybernetic civilization and who, while spitefully awaiting the direction it has taken to be proven wrong, quote Nietzsche or Marx, or again something lifted from biology on the birth and withering away of organisms.

Translated from Polish by RICHARD LOURIE

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Pearl K. Bell

American Fiction: Forgetting the Ordinary Truths

In a country that builds obsolescence into its automobiles, movie stars, and protest movements, the same calculated mortality appears in its literary fiction and in the boldly plausible generalizations of its critics. A mere seven years ago Leslie Fiedler, with his characteristic blend of hyperbole and *Zeitgeist,* announced the birth of a new breed of American novelist, "the new mutants," whose subject was nothing less than the end of man. In their brutal mockery of the American scene for its grossness and materialistic decadence, Fiedler declared, such books as Joseph Heller's *Catch 22,* Thomas Pynchon's *V.,* and William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* heralded not only the end of the "bourgeois" novel but the end of language and human history.

In place of those once separate spheres of fictional influence labeled the Southern novel, the homosexual novel, the Jewish novel, the woman's novel—and such colonial subdivisions as the Williamsburg novel, the Mississippi novel, the Hollywood novel—what would now dominate the scene, sweeping in on the easy ride of youthful insurgency, would be novels envisioning the nightmare before us. Using the supernatural fantasy and future-gazing of science fiction, the new mutants would depict "the post-humanist, post-male, post-white, post-heroic . . . post-Jewish world." And for a time Fiedler's prophecy did indeed seem dismayingly close to the truth, as Heller and Burroughs and Pynchon were joined in the critical limelight by such celebrants of unreason, chaos, and inexorable decay as Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., John Barth, Rudolph Wurlitzer, Donald Barthelme, and a horde of mini-Jeremiahs crying havoc on the Western world.

By now, however, it has become abundantly clear that these self-appointed heresiarchs of an apocalyptic future have been far less influential and novelistically persuasive than Fiedler assumed they would be. Though the cultural syndrome descried by Fiedler has certainly not vanished, neither has the traditional realistic novel whose material draws its strength from the memory, experience, and human ordinariness of its readers. The new mutants have not managed to monopolize the world of the novel, nor does it look as though they ever will. Pynchon's *V.,* read with a jaded eye in 1972, almost a decade after its publication, seems a capricious victory of violent and indiscriminate matter over mind, which is one definition of madness. Vonnegut, haunted for over two decades by the bombing of Dresden which he witnessed as a prisoner of war, seems permanently locked in the adolescent-wise-guy slouch that has always been such a beguiling but improvident pose for the All-American Boy Writer, with one foot on Huck Finn's raft and the other in a steaming double bed. Barth, in *Giles Goat-Boy* and the novellas now collected in *Chimera,*

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becomes so hopelessly tangled in his proliferating metaphorical ingenuities that in the end he seems a failed Houdini; sealed inside the magic barrel, he can't remember how he'd planned to get out.

Yet the antirational, anti-intellectual mood which Fiedler so shrewdly diagnosed is still a formidably pervasive current of American culture, and the rejection of the past that grows out of such a mood goes hand in hand with prophecy of a hallucinatory future. Though Fiedler's extremist fiction has failed to materialize as triumphantly as he foresaw, many of the distorting obsessions of the mutant temper are encountered in a wide range of novels that seem to meet the demands of still another critic, Richard Poirier, who bends himself as approvingly to the present climate as Fiedler did to the portents of 1965.

In Poirier's recent book of essays, *The Performing Self*, this exuberantly liberated professor of literature dismisses the cultural legacy of all centuries before the present holy confusion as repressive "waste"; disorder is now the highest good, and "writing is a form of energy not accountable to the orderings anyone makes of it and specifically not accountable to the liberal humanitarian values most readers want to find there." Though Poirier tries with laborious tenacity to squeeze Norman Mailer—the chronic problem child of American writing—into his scheme of great fiction as a "politics of self-parody," his critical effort fails altogether to persuade one that Mailer can ever be fitted into such arbitrary patterns. For one thing, Mailer seems to have abandoned the writing of novels for the less accountable turgidities of confessional journalism, and for another, his singularly quirky guilt and self-rationalizing turmoil are much too painfully serious to leave any room for that playfulness in literature which, according to Poirier's touchstone of the higher modernity, "makes fun of itself as it goes along."

Donald Barthelme exemplifies Poirier's conception of this modern literature to perfection, because to begin with he obviously regards himself as a comic writer (though I have yet to find a line of his work genuinely funny). He is a perversely dedicated student of the contemporary junkheap, and his tin-can-and-broken-bottle collages attempt a frontal assault on language that seems extraordinarily attuned to the kind of radical sensibility that strains against the "repression" of words as it gropes for "consciousness," nonverbal sensitivities, and the psychedelic innocence of the full-blown mind. Barthelme's writing consistently reduces language—and the things that language names and identifies—to a kitchen midden of dehumanized potsherds that no literary archeologist in his right mind would ever try to piece together. (William Burroughs writes of a similar nausea with words in *The Job*, in which he invents a machine that will discard "the old verbal garbage" and achieve "the baptism of silence." Even the sometime humanist William Gass has complained: "That novels should be made of words, and merely words, is shocking, really. It's as though you had discovered that your wife were made of rubber.")

"Fragments are the only forms I trust," Barthelme declares in his story "See the Moon." His stories, along with the novel *Snow White*, do not pretend to any ideas, comic or otherwise, about this "trash phenomenon"—the steadily mounting detritus of words and things that forms Barthelme's image of American life—but are composed of the trash itself, Pop-eyed curiosity and random spontaneity carried to an ultimate lunacy. The seven dwarves of *Snow White* have a pedantic liking for "books that have a lot of *dreck* in them, matter which presents itself as not wholly relevant . . . but which, carefully attended to, can supply a kind of 'sense' of what is going on"—a statement as close to self-justification, if not quite self-parody, as Barthelme allows himself to go. What could be more perfectly expressive of contempt for the ordering intellect, for the authority of culture, for any discriminatory

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distinction between the multitudinous and the valuable—if all men are equal, all things are also equal—than a writer whose work consists almost entirely, or so he likes to claim, of the raw sewage of spontaneous experience?

In the long run what makes Barthelme interesting is not his literary merit—without a tremendous revving up of duty and will, I find him unreadable—but the way in which his extreme submission to one aspect of the counter-cultural temper leads to its very opposite. The *reductio ad absurdum* of spontaneity, and of the well of warm feeling and response it is supposed to tap, is Barthelme's icy inhumanity, man and his language reduced to the flotsam of discardable things, in a lunar hallucinatory Armageddon of flip-top soda cans and TV-commercial jingles. The *dreck,* the waste, it turns out, is not Poirier's literary heritage of the past, but its hectically celebrated opposite, the way we live now.

A crucial part of that current contempt for the past, and the idealization of "freedom of expression," is the extraordinary public exposure of sex—not, one is assured, in the nasty interest of prurience, but in the cause of sex as a radical act; in George Steiner's ironic words, "eros as the last and decisive frontier of political emancipation." Yet novelists in America, one should remember, have for many years been granted considerably more license in the portrayal of sexual behavior than playwrights, or movie and magazine writers, and by now the outermost limits of daring have become so commonplace in fiction that the truly innovatory novel is the one without any sex whatsoever.

Yet the issue that remains largely unexplored is more complicated than sex or no sex: it is, whether suffocatingly detailed concentration on the details of sex can intensify or clarify the larger human experience of a novel, without moving at one extreme into the sadistic degradation of hard-core pornography or, at the other, into mere sardonic buffoonery. Even more to the point, does the number of orgies and blow-jobs a writer crowds into three or four hundred pages tell us any more about the quality of human freedom in our time than a Master and Johnson dossier? Sex is of course an enormously important area of private freedom, but the verbal power of sex, in great literary art like *Ulysses* and *Moll Flanders,* either transcends the body or mocks it. In Henry Miller's *Tropics,* in Mailer's *An American Dream,* in the countless no-holds-barred novels of our present yearning to breathe free, the body is either vulgarized or abused, in most cases with a peculiarly unemancipated violence.

What may, but probably won't, put an end to one kind of alliance in contemporary American fiction between sex and the grotesque is Philip Roth's *The Breast,* which misses its presumably satiric target—anybody's guess: infantile regression, men, sex—with even more depressing ineptitude than his sorry attempt at political mockery, *Our Gang. The Breast* is a rank novella about a man who turns into a six-foot-long female breast with an even longer memory of sexual conquest. The sick joke of *Portnoy's Complaint* was somewhat redeemed by the manically outraged family portrait, but *The Breast* is all sick and no joke, a repellent Lenny Bruce one-liner spun out to 78 tediously smirking pages, and it comes out of the same bag of commercial slickness hiding under the sackcloth of honesty as that very nasty Jules Feiffer movie *Carnal Knowledge.*

What has yet to be mentioned emphatically enough about all the writhing bodies in "serious" American fiction today is their suffocating dullness as an object of prolonged literary scrutiny. Try as he will, Philip Roth's pretense to metaphoric grandeur—if I say metamorphosis I must be Kafka—does not save him from boring us to death. Yet a novel like Stanley Elkin's *The Dick Gibson Show,* as extravagantly sex-ridden a fantasy as anything Barth or Roth has attempted,

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blasphemous and outrageous and often even nauseatingly raunchy, a noisy carnival of scattershot jokes, slapstick, howling obscenity, and truly dazzling comic energy, is given no merit badges by the critics who so eagerly pay tribute to the kind of writer John Leonard has described as "the instant genius with hair between his toes, fragments between his ears, and a gristle string of Wittgenstein beween his teeth—munching out novels about the corruption of words."

Stanley Elkin is not a sexual or verbal nihilist but a brilliantly profane wit, impudent and sometimes barbaric because his comic exuberance is literally irrepressible, who in *The Dick Gibson Show* uses the history of radio in America for an original commentary on American life. In Elkin's hands radio, that cacophony of voices and static, becomes a shudderingly funny blueprint of American popular culture, and the way the mass media distort and eventually obliterate the distinction between public voices and private souls. When the spectral radio announcer Dick Gibson—a herd of alters in search of an ego—takes over a talk show, it turns into uncontrollable confession, a burlesque Miss Lonelyhearts of the air, a poignant and horrifying vocal parade of the lonely, the mad, the blind. But unlike Barthelme, Elkin sees the shape of a man still struggling to stay alive in the insidious American junkheap, yells his own nutty "Watch out" and seizes him before he goes under.

In the midst of all the clamor about the corruptness of the age, the politics (sexual and otherwise) of nonconformity, the innovatory wisdom of the unintelligible, what's new (good), what's bad (old), who loses and who wins, most serious novelists go on doing the best they can, which can be either marvelous or pedestrian, with the same tools that novelists have used for over two hundred years—experience, intelligence, language, and imagination. A novelist begins not with definitions of reality and authenticity, or an abstract adversary posture about the sterility of naturalism or realism, but with what he knows—about himself and more than himself. He does not start out on a quest for literary salvation, in the form of self-parody, or antihumanist values, or any fuzzy philosophical road signs leading straight to the Nature of Modern Life. He starts out with what is there, and hopes to find out where it can take him.

Yet the air has never been more confusingly thick than it is now with modish cant about revolution and repression, illusion and reality, liberation and alienation. As the young novelist Ronald Sukenick recently wailed in *Partisan Review:* "Those of us who sense the absence of what Wallace Stevens called 'sovereign images' for our reality can't write in the mode of social realism because it is exactly our idea of realness that is in question. Our particular moment and place is located in our heads and our bodies and at the risk of solipsism we must start there and push outward." But it is precisely the incoherence of solipsism that such a novelist welcomes—his use of the word *risk* is either slyly disingenuous or inexplicably naive. Saul Bellow's Artur Sammler comes much closer to defining what is really at stake when he wonders, looking incredulously at New York in the late 1960s, whether civilization is about to collapse.

> You could see the suicidal impulses of civilization pushing strongly. You wondered whether this Western culture could survive universal dissemination . . . whether the worst enemies of civilization might not prove to be its petted intellectuals who attacked it at its weakest moments—attacked it in the name of proletarian revolution, in the name of reason, and in the name of irrationality, in the name of visceral depth, in the name of sex, in the name of perfect instantaneous freedom. . . . A full bill of demand and complaint was therefore presented by each individual. Non-negotiable. Recognizing no scarcity of supply in any human department.

Indeed, it is not an absence of "sovereign images" that afflicts the American novelist,

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but an embarrassment of abstract riches, noisily competing for the writer's assent to the single truth of one moral calculus.

Yet the fact that a writer chooses to work in a conventional naturalistic mode is no guarantee that he will be free of apocalyptic infection. In a world that has become intoxicated with the power of comprehensive explanations that in fact explain nothing, many traditionally gifted novelists have become so tainted by the need to demonstrate how perceptively they comprehend the enigmatic forces that struggle to dominate the contemporary scene that they fall into as destructive a trap as the experimental writers happily gargling their litanies inside "our heads and our bodies." In both cases they start not with what they know, but with a chimerical map of the *Zeitgeist.* Among the avowedly traditional novelists today, none can simulate a comprehensive insight and response more artfully than John Updike. It has been said of Updike over and again that he has nothing to say and says it exquisitely, and his recent *Rabbit Redux* offers no fresh ground for disagreement. But this novel is fraudulent in a special way, not least in its cunning topicality.

Where's the action in America now, at this culturally critical moment—and the bright novelist is at the ready with the first moon landing, an embittered blue-collar Middle American, a confused middle-class teenage dropout, an enraged black, the Vietnam war, sexual promiscuity, drugs, and even automation in the printing industry. Updike's exhaustive attention to current problems is like two solid months of the *Sunday Times Magazine* with the dullness thrown out, but the lapidary metaphors and technically adroit shifts of scene fail to hide his manipulative detachment from every human figure in his American sampler. What at first glance seems to be sympathetic curiosity about the human predicaments tearing Americans apart quickly reveals an aridity of feeling in the midst of stylistic plenty.

Even a far more interesting writer, such as Bernard Malamud, in his ambitious and erratically powerful *The Tenants,* is infected with the current novelist's mania for expecting more from the immediate social scene than he can actually make it yield. Since his early stories about East European immigrants in *The Magic Barrel,* Malamud has moved steadily away from this private heartland, and the distant fields have not always proved greener to his touch. In *The Tenants,* he has tried to shape his own troubled image of racial conflict in America today, and though the scene is superbly rendered—a moldering Manhattan tenement that has been emptied of every inhabitant but his principal character, a novelist named Lesser—Malamud tries to urge his lessons on the reader with too insistent a pointer. The intellectual's romantic dream of good will, fine manners, equality, nobility, Malamud is aching to convince us, is a sick naiveté, and our crumbling civilization can no longer suppress the atavistic craving for slaughter.

If Malamud had exercised some restraint, and let the bare bones of his story—black writer and white writer in mortal combat—stand in all their plainness, *The Tenants* might have been an extraordinary achievement. But the lure of mythification is overpoweringly strong for all sorts of American novelists these days, and not even Malamud had the confidence to resist it. Lest we miss the symbolic resonances of his white and black antagonists, Malamud tacks on a long and befuddling fantasy about Africa, in a misjudgment all too familiar in American novels today. For it points to a misunderstanding of what the novel as a form of literary art can successfully attempt to be. It is as though the imaginative perspective of a writer, in the act of transforming and reconstructing his actuality, can no longer be trusted to reveal anything *large* enough about the wilderness of human experience. Instead the novelist is exhorted—or exhorts himself—to summon up a grandly nihilistic or symbolic design before he sets a word on paper. To this futile end he will stretch, in-

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flate, invent, and pad his details to fit the pretentious reach of that design, but inevitably the fabric of his novel, like any fragile substance strained beyond its breaking point, ends up full of holes.

Thus the dream sequence of *The Tenants* ends with black lion and white lamb joined in wedded peace by a rabbi who says, at the end of the ceremony, "Someday God will bring together Ishmael and Israel to live as one people. It won't be the first miracle." In Malamud's case—and he is by no means the worst offender—the distortions of the symbolic dream expose an unthinking sentimentality that fatally confutes the bleak finality which the events in *The Tenants* enforce.

In a curiously revealing footnote of *The Performing Self,* Professor Poirier quotes a letter sent out to reviewers by Saul Bellow's publisher about a printer's error that slipped into the first edition of the collected stories *Mosby's Memoirs,* and then sneers at such fussiness as the sure sign that Bellow is American literature's Flaubert—"the Flaubert terrified of cliché and enamored of *le mot juste.*" When energy is all, precision seems despicable. Yet what will probably be remembered of American writing in the 1960s and '70s, long after Barthelme and Pynchon have been declared passé, is being written by novelists who care more for people than their garbage, and for words—precise and suggestive—more than *dreck.* Saul Bellow is still, as he has been for almost 20 years, the most inventive, intelligent, and genuinely *surprising* novelist in America, and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* is one of the few contemporary books that engage the mind and heart as one reads.

Nor has Bellow come to such achievement by turning his back on the representative insanities of the contemporary wasteland, or by being any less responsive to the tragicomic prevalence of the grotesque in the world he deals with. Indeed, not only *Mr. Sammler's Planet* but most of Bellow's fiction, going back 30 years to *Dangling Man,* has drawn much of its dramatic power from the misshapen and the misbegotten. The cripple Einhorn, the quack psychiatrist Dr. Tamkin, the shady millionaire Mintouchian, Moses Elkanah Herzog pouring his heart out in unmailed letters to famous men, Sammler's crazy daughter Shula, her junk-crammed shopping bags dangling like untreated tumors from her fingers—Bellow has as quick and mordant an eye for all this as any of Fiedler's hotshots of the apocalypse.

What separates Bellow from these voyeurs of the bizzare, however, is the intellectual toughness that he brings to his portraits: the grotesque, Bellow quietly reminds us, is part of the world but not all of it. (A passionate embrace of extremes has been endemic to American writing from Melville to Mailer. As the novelist John Gardner recently put it: "Our experience of extremes . . . makes all Americans radicals. Our normal view is that if everything isn't terrific, it stinks. Thus American self-doubts about Vietnam, race relations and ecology lead instantly to a conviction that life is unendurable, God is horror, and our wives and children all hate us.") And in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* there appears a quality not always prominent in Bellow's earlier and more self-consciously metaphysical work, his highly sophisticated but nonetheless deeply affecting compassion.

Artur Sammler, having miraculously survived more horror under the Nazis than most men could summon up in a lifetime of bad dreams, is now ruminatively waiting for the end—of his own life certainly, and perhaps that of the planet Earth as well—on the upper West Side of New York, a lunatic cornucopia of grandiose schemers who want to colonize the moon, or get rich quick, or make a revolution. Sammler is alert to every nuance of their demented audacity, and though he can scarcely admire this distasteful world, he can understand it all, and even bring himself to forgive its self-destructive excesses. And he does this without surrendering his grasp of moral necessity. It is

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in part because Bellow chose to end *Mr. Sammler's Planet* with the grave imperative of human obligation—the "natural knowledge" that man has a contract "to do what was required of him"—that the countercultural pacemakers have set upon him in full cry. As though his derisive portrayal of the student radicals at Columbia, jeering at Sammler's lecture on English rationalists, weren't bad enough, he insists on such *mots justes* as duty and obligation! These are the unforgivable obscenities in America today.

While the trendy professors intone their dirge over the corpse of the past, the creature refuses to die. In our hysterical devotion to the *carpe diem* present, it is easy to lose sight of a persistent and living strength of American fiction, regionalism, with its nourishing sense of both place and history as unique human forms of continuity and order. Though the Gothic novel of the South died with Faulkner and Carson McCullers—such slick imitations as James Dickey's *Deliverance* are more sensationalistic than Southern—the greatest of living Southern writers, Eudora Welty, now free of the shadow Faulkner cast on much of her earlier work, moves in her sixties from strength to strength. In *Losing Battles,* her recent masterpiece about Mississippi country people in the 1930s, she allows the past to yield its lessons for the present without resorting to the dull belligerence of most black writing today, and without the creaking mythical sonorities that blurred Malamud's vision of race in America.

In Miss Welty's novel, the huge Vaughan clan has gathered for its annual reunion on a parched summer Sunday. Death hovers like an uninvited guest at the edge of the day, and not all the ghosts are made welcome, yet *Losing Battles* is abundant in broad Southern comedy. This is partly a matter of Miss Welty's grasp of regional idiom and eccentric gesture as the essence of this tribal gathering—"more and more voices, all telling it —bragging, lying, singing, pretending, protesting, swearing everything into being, swearing everything away—but telling it"—and partly the earthy love she feels for these farm folk with all the instinctive richness of a lifetime of knowing.

Yet *Losing Battles* is by no means only an elegiac celebration of vanished rural innocence. Miss Welty judges her know-nothings with unfaltering clarity, and through them she can subtly point to a later Southern world in which the Southern attachment to its "nigger-hating" ignorance turned ugly and malevolent. (Eudora Welty is not clairvoyant, yet when Medgar Evers was shot to death, she described his assassin with uncanny accuracy in a story written before the murderer was known to, much less apprehended by, the Mississippi police.) This is not to say that the rural crackers of *Losing Battles* are anything like Faulkner's reptilian Snopeses, for some of them have a pastoral nobility that is closer to Lena Grove in *Light in August.* But the beginnings of a later horror are there in the 1930s, and Miss Welty does not flinch from the ugly fruit they will come to yield. This unrelenting yet loving wholeness of her gaze sets Eudora Welty apart from the more tendentious writers of the American South like Walker Percy and William Styron.

The rooted sense of place, then, can still be crucial to an American novelist's imaginative energy, and some admirable novels have recently come from that most eccentric of American regions, the state of California. (At least in the United States, where a region can be larger than an entire European country, the answer to Geoffrey Grigson's recent question—whether "a literature about place, literature of any real kind in which place predominates, is any more possible?"—is decidedly yes.)

Interestingly, the writers born and raised in California, Like Joan Didion, do not write its best novels, perhaps because it has been peculiar to California, like the City of New York, to be a beckoning oasis for people

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fleeing a seedy elsewhere, an Eldorado of the mind for American romantics and madmen. It is exactly the collision between movie-struck unreality and the sinister actuality of the West that has produced some of the most original fiction of this American century, from Nathanael West's *Day of the Locust,* published in 1939, to the recent *West of the Rockies,* by Daniel Fuchs, and *The Western Coast,* by Paula Fox. (This strong need to use geography as the commanding image of the title itself is a clue to the force of place in novels about California.) As Joan Didion, a monotonously narrow novelist but a brilliant journalist, has written: "California is a place in which a boom mentality and a sense of Chekhovian loss meet in uneasy suspension; in which the mind is troubled by some buried but ineradicable suspicion that things had better work here, because here, beneath that immense bleached sky, is where we run out of continent."

Where else but in California can we find, as the ordinariness of daily life, precisely that dislocated, crack-brained world of the postbourgeois future that Vonnegut and Barth have struggled to concoct in their sci-fi inventions, or Burroughs in his drug-induced hallucinations? With its zany religious cults and hypnotically uniform climate, its swamis and Esalen Institutes, its floating population of eccentrics in exile, California is the living hyperbole of America, yet the far-out hip writers have ignored its rich accessibility for less interesting visions of their own imagining. Only that very perceptive writer of mysteries, Ross Macdonald, has made any serious attempt to deal with the hysteria and violence that keep erupting into the surface of California life.

In Southern California, we run out of sanity as well as continent. And the hub of the wheeling dream is that assembly line of unreality, the movie industry. Hollywood has haunted every writer lured by its money and celebrity, but not even Fitzgerald succeeded in capturing its bizarre haphazardness. What Edmund Wilson wrote about Los Angeles in 1940 is, at least for novelists, essentially unchanged: "In this city that swarms with writers, none yet has really mustered the gumption to lay bare the heart and bowels of the moving-picture business. . . . It seems to be true, in general, of Hollywood as a subject for fiction that those who write about it are not authentic insiders and that those who know about it don't write."

One important exception to this rule is Daniel Fuchs, who, after 34 years of writing almost nothing but screenplays, *is* an authentic insider, and last year he published the Hollywood novel that everyone had given up hope he would ever attempt. *West of the Rockies* is a short, tense story of that Hollywood period "when television was comparatively new and the big picture studios still throbbed, the collapse yet to come." Part of that collapse is prefigured in Fuchs's terrifying portrait of the aging cinema goddess, Adele Hogue. In Fuchs's taut, nervously rapid prose, we feel the noose of failure tightening around her neck. Everything and everyone in *West of the Rockies* seems hounded, hard, delirious with the imminent disaster that money alone can prevent or make happen.

Yet for all the battering power of Fuchs's story, it finally seems to bog down in its own despair. The movie world he knows so well turns into such a mercilessly bleak equation, the weight of his attention to catastrophe and deceit becomes so oppressive, that we are left with no sense of what Edmund Wilson suggested was essential to any writer using Hollywood as his subject—"a larger picture which has its center in a larger world." Fuchs has always been gripped by a deeply temperamental disaffection—it is strongly present in the beautiful novels of Brooklyn that he wrote as a young man, in the 1930s—but in *West of the Rockies* the mood becomes desperately self-enclosed, the darkness too unremittingly pertinent only to Fuchs's own sense of the hopeless fitness of things.

It is precisely the opposite quality of openness, the suspense a novelist can derive from

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a passionate receptivity to the varieties of human experience, that brings excitement to Paula Fox's version of California life in *The Western Coast.* Some reviewers may be quick to judge it only another *Bildungsroman,* but the novel is free of the cliché lockstep up the ladder of identity that the textbook term so often suggests. At this moment in American fiction, when incoherence masquerades as innovation, *The Western Coast* makes brilliant use of a currently disreputable but traditionally honored idea of a novel's purpose—that it can deal with the treacherous passage from innocence to experience and earn the right, without sentimentality or simplification, to say in the end "Look, I have come through!"

Like Nathanael West and Daniel Fuchs, Paula Fox has a rich and witty memory of the verdant aimlessness of Southern California—her period is the 1940s, though one California decade seems remarkably like another—but her feeling for people is more generous than West's and less bleakly predictable than Fuchs's. Nor is her young innocent, Annie Gianfala, any ordinary waif. Unlike Updike's fashionably middle-class dropout, Annie does not choose to become an outsider but begins as one—her mother dead in the girl's infancy, her drunken artist father too busy ruining new marriages and breaking old promises to remember her existence.

Not quite eighteen when the book opens, Annie has stumbled West from New York to join a feckless would-be lover. Her ignorance of the world and its ways, her lonely vulnerability to chance and malice, seem to mark her for an early doom. But she is a natural survivor, with a mysterious will to remain intact and move on, because she has the tenacity and the courage to learn. At the end of five often bruising years in Los Angeles, Annie has acquired some resilient defenses, and no longer relies blindly on the reflexes of the born victim. Miss Fox suggests that Annie has salvaged something from her rough youth, without becoming hard or smugly invulnerable, for either "resolution" would falsify the powerful authenticity of the author's judgment. It is exactly the precariousness of Annie's small victory over innocence which is established with haunting clarity at the end of the book, the dramatic telling of a difficult truth.

THE MODISH CRITICS are impatient with such deceptively small and subtle statements about human experience. They prefer the meretricious melodrama of generalization—that the past is dead, the present a *dolce vita* of important confusion, the future a probable nightmare. And the novelists who listen to the apocalyptic siren songs of critics like Fiedler and Poirier are swept dangerously off course. But a few writers of substance pay no attention to this lust for metaphoric danger or to the suicidal contempt for the past, for they know that what matters to a novelist is at once less inflated and more severely challenging than the rhetoric of the apocalypse can comprehend. In the pursuit of experimental trickery, the self-styled innovators forget that, as a character in *The Western Coast* remarks, "Ordinary life had its ordinary powerful truths," and they are not to be had without effort. □

A SPECIAL FEATURE
IN OUR SPRING ISSUE:

The Higher Reaches of the Lower Orders

A Critique of the Theories of B. F. Skinner

by David Spitz

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David Bromwich

Some American Masks

We hear a reader praising this or that writer with the puzzled affection to which American literature frequently drives its admirers, we think of the famous phrase about the "complex fate" of being an American, we say to ourselves, yes, how well Henry James understood our peculiar anxieties. It was James, too, in the same statement, who warned against our putting too high a value on Europe. Taken together, the two parts of his observation are likely to seem either obvious or gnomic. Obvious, universal, and hopelessly dull if he is telling the American Character to take care of its own interests: but what else can he mean? One may suggest that James is speaking of a certain kind of American, the artist, and cautioning us to stay on the lookout for disguises. In America, nothing goes by so easily as a change of dress, yet in art such changes have permanent effects on the wearer. That James himself never shook off a rather advanced case of Europe in the head need not really trouble us; on the contrary, his comment is significant precisely as a queer moment of subjective clairvoyance pretending to be objective. Such are the intervals of self-consciousness with which our best artists have been afflicted or blessed. At all events, grant for the sake of argument that James was indeed writing about the masks our artists require—grant that he saw to the center of the problem better than anyone else has done. The altogether mad cultural careerings of the last two decades will then look something like a normal state of affairs.

Against the shifting background of our popular culture, I should like to trace the development of a few artists whose achievement seems to me to be lasting. We have to remember sometimes that popular culture and intellectual culture, sub- and superculture, have the same roots. Nothing good can come of criticism that ignores this fact, and though fools may step in without compunction, the rest of us will hesitate before drawing the line between them. Take as an example a book like *The Adventures of Augie March,* which comes close to being a great novel. There was a change of heart in the style here, as if finally the novelist, together with his hero, had stepped down into the vulgate of experience. For that gesture, and for the comic richness that remains this author's surest gift, the book was adequately praised. Yet our novelists are not satisfied to perform good works in the ordinary way, and now, in a longer perspective, we can recognize in Saul Bellow's novel a rallying cry and an unwitting portent.

"Unstoried, artless, unenhanced," Frost's words for the American wilderness, nicely describe the character of Augie March. More perhaps than any other hero in the picaresque tradition, he lives imaginatively as a type, not an individual. He exists as a force without self, and this, we are to believe, is the curse that haunts us all. However, it is also a proof of grace—the American grace, after Emerson, after Whitman, after Augie's myriad precursors who spoke jauntily free-style and made the record in their own way. Twice during the course of the novel Augie gets warned about the empty mirror which one day will greet the man who travels as he does, dangerously, in a world without shadow. It is the two women of his life, Thea and Stella, who make the complaint, sound-

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ing a good deal like each other; and it seems a perfect accident that Augie should marry the second of these after running away from the first. The trouble, they say, is that Augie defines himself too much as a medium for other people: "They live through observation by the ones around them, and they want you to live like that too. Augie, darling, don't do it. They will make you suffer from what they are." His reply comes near the end of the novel, in the charmingly improvised theory of "axial lines." To live, Augie says, is to be open to experience, and therefore necessarily to appear transparent.

> I must have had a feeling since I was a kid about these axial lines which made me want to have my existence on them, and so I have said "no" like a stubborn fellow to all my persuaders, just on the obstinacy of my memory of these lines, never entirely clear. But lately I have felt these thrilling lines again. When striving stops, there they are as a gift. I was lying on the couch here before and they suddenly went quivering right straight through me. Truth, love, peace, bounty, usefulness, harmony! And all noise and grates, distortion, chatter, distraction, effort, superfluity, passed off like something unreal. And I believe that any man at any time can come back to these axial lines, even if an unfortunate bastard, if he will be quiet and wait it out. The ambition of something special and outstanding I have always had is only a boast that distorts this knowledge from its origin, which is the oldest knowledge, older than the Euphrates, older than the Ganges. At any time life can come together again and man be regenerated, and doesn't have to be a public servant like Osiris who gets torn apart annually for the sake of the common prosperity, but the man himself, finite and taped as he is, can still come where the axial lines are. He will be brought into focus. He will live with true joy. Even his pains will be joy if they are true, even his helplessness will not take away his power, even wandering will not take him away from himself, even the big social jokes and hoaxes need not make him ridiculous, even disappointment after disappointment need not take away his love. Death will not be terrible to him if life is not.

Bellow writes like this now and then, expansively. We may surely assume that Augie's persona in such a passage has widened to include the author's, so that we have the argument of the book served up to us on a platter. Certainly it is a great theme, the subject of more substantial novels even than *Augie March*, and yet in Bellow's hands it may seem curiously vulnerable to misreading.

Augie's commitment goes past the aesthetic to the ethical: his axioms are not merely geometrical. His "no" is meant to be more, in other words, than an assertion of style. But how far does Bellow succeed in conveying that deeper sense of revolt? There is much, I think, to admire in this novel, and much (as in all of Bellow's work) to applaud humanly even if one cannot justify its fictional setting. What the author does not quite accomplish is a steady portrayal of the soul that lies beyond this particular recalcitrant force. Indeed, so plain is his falling short, so nearly does he become what he describes, that eventually the two halves of Augie's character, his timidity and his waywardness, split off into their natural antagonism. On one side Augie generates the embattled ironists, Moses Herzog and Artur Sammler, while the rest of his progeny appear in the guise of Enemy—drifters, petty inverters—in a good part of the later fiction. This was perhaps inevitable, but it brings me once again to my warning about popular culture. We have our continuities after all. The drifter whose energy Bellow loved, and whose content he came to reject, is now the celebrated dark angel of our representative mass fictions, from *Midnight Cowboy* and *Easy Rider* to the most recent production of the first slick novelist one might care to name.

One scene from *Augie March* can speak for those qualities in Augie which mark him as a *capable* rebel like Huck Finn, and un-

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like the fashionably impotent avatars who have followed him. It is Bellow's largest failure in the novel that he relies too heavily on his readers to infer such qualities—generally we see the hero drifting, simply drifting, with the current. But the defect has its compensation in a generously drawn episode in which Augie rejects his rich girlfriend, whom Bellow has unabashedly named Lucy Magnus, for the sake of a girl in trouble named Mimi. This is, for me, one of the great moments in recent American fiction, and one will search in vain for anything quite as dramatic in the later Bellow: Lucy says goodbye with a pinched smile and Augie, a wanderer once more, ends up beside Mimi in the maternity ward of a hospital, waiting for the new year to strike.

> There I sat by her bed, it being half-darkness. Nurses coming to bring infants for the breast now and then, there were whispers and crimped cries and sounds of turning in bed, and of coaxing and sucking. I was open to feelings that had no obstacle in coming to cover me, as I was, in darkness and to the side, scorched, bitter, foul, and violent; and these feelings receding by and by, I was aware of others full of great suggestion and of this place where I was cast up. I began to breathe by my own normal measure and grew much calmer. When the midnight noise exploded, the tooting, sirens, horns, all that jubilation, it came in rather faint, all the windows being shut, and the nursery squalling continued just the same.
>
> At about one o'clock, alert enough to hear me stirring, Mimi whispered, "What are you doing here?"
>
> "I don't have any place special to go."

Augie at the end of the novel is compared to Columbus; Bellow, like everyone else, was busy discovering America. And here is the unwitting portent. Our new discoverers carefully steer between the highest seriousness and the lowest put-on. They carry sobriquets like Captain America, and they are played by actors like Peter Fonda. Augie is their legitimate ancestor because, Jewish in name, he is subtly Unitarian at heart—because he accepts, mostly, and his "no" hardly ever sounds in thunder. We may conclude that Augie stands among his creator's most disarming masks. That there is not beneath it something of a secret corruption sets him apart from the less distinguished incarnations of his type.

Bellow started as a writer of realistic prose, and broke with his own past in a novel that contains better than its share of outrageous metaphors, classical allusions, invocations of various muses. Yet the tradition probably will remain stronger than the rebels against it. Gritty realism: it cuts across the arts, and stays respectable in films like *All the King's Men* and *The Hustler*. We can say that realism is a central current, the testing ground for original talents who will then want to depart from it. And we are reminded of another novelist, Norman Mailer, who wrote a first novel which is impressive yet in some ways not surprising, who also made his break, and who in contrast to Bellow has severed all his past connections. We are right to think of these authors as living at opposite poles of our culture. It was Mailer, almost alone among his contemporaries, who could dismiss *The Adventures of Augie March* as a travelogue for timid intellectuals. The judgment is wrong, but this matters less than the authority he summoned to speak as an author following his own sharply different path, not ready to be troubled by what looked like toy-room antics. Mailer has of course failed at a good many things; he has sometimes even offered his failure as our proper aesthetic experience; but after *The Naked and the Dead* he has always surprised. Whether or not I am right about the persistence of our realistic tradition, Mailer's true awakening as an artist coincides with his departure from it. The discovery is there in *Barbary Shore,* his least recognized work but I think his best, for which I shall pause to make a small appreciation.

We are victims of an ethos—a time, a place, a set of possible opinions—more than

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we can ever know, and it happens every once in a while that we wonder how an artist would have been affected if a given work of his making had been received in a slightly different spirit, if the spectrum of opinions about the work had been a bit more colorful. *Barbary Shore* had a reception so poor, and so uncomprehending, and Mailer is so sensitive to his own special audience, that I do not think we can avoid realizing that the episode changed his career. Where he might have been encouraged he was discouraged, and his existence as a novelist seems to have been very nearly terminated. Yet *Barbary Shore* is a book unique in our literature—America has nothing else to show quite in this vein, unless one counts "The Man Who Studied Yoga," also written by Mailer at about the same period. The narrative pitch is absolutely controlled, but the form of observation here is not in the least realistic, nor yet is it allegorical. The novel has nothing really to do with Senator Joseph McCarthy, and is not much concerned either, I should say, with Marx or Lenin or Trotsky. The narrator is a writer trying to make sense of a bad time for the imagination, sorting through the fragments of his broken life to find a pattern, lighting at last on the ersatz remedy which is History. This is what the novel is about. Its conclusion, where the narrator takes for his own the embassy of revolutionary communism, in fact means nothing, because History saves no one. The depressive mood comes out of details, but the final order of the book belongs to a tenebrous world of neurosis.

This is so far from the commonplace notions about *Barbary Shore* that I hesitate to go any further. However, it deserves some quoting.

> I was gone for hours and ended at the docks where I sat on a deserted quay, flipping pebbles into the oily water which swirled about the piles. Twilight came, and across the harbor, skyscrapers reflected the sun. I ate my solitary meal in a lunchroom and returned to my desk in an attempt to write.

When a reader mentions *Barbary Shore*, this is what I see—not anxious left-wing posturing, and not the kind of single-mindedness which traces our darkest disease back to politics. The discussions of a revolutionary past in poorly lit tenement rooms are counterpoint. A recurring dream takes its shape as a leitmotif: a man returning home from a journey feels suddenly estranged from all that surrounds him.

> His hands fold upon his heart to still its beating. It is a dream, he thinks, hugging his body in the rear of the cab. He is dreaming and the city is imaginary and the cab is imaginary. And he goes on.
>
> I shout at him. You are wrong, I cry, although he does not hear me; this city is the real city, the material city, and your vehicle is history. Those are the words I use, and then the image shatters.
>
> Night comes and I am alone with a candle. What has been fanciful is now concrete. Although the room in which I write has an electric circuit, it functions no longer. Time passes and I wait by the door, listening to the footsteps of roomers as they go out to work for the night. In fourteen hours they will be back.
>
> So the blind lead the blind and the deaf shout warnings to one another until their voices are lost.

What has been fanciful is now concrete. It was either an astute critic or Mailer himself who remarked that this was above all else a claustrophobic novel. The great American temptation is to an undiscriminating openness; Mailer seems to be carrying out a strict inversion. Perceptions are gathered somewhere at the edge of consciousness, where they wait, never quite moving across to make a convincingly real image. The effect is one which we associate with certain French novels and films—Mailer would recognize an ally in the director who made *Vivre sa Vie*—but his contribution is original in being fleshed out with broad American types, almost grotesques. Again,

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the dialogue has been rendered brittly out of touch with the way people actually talk. This is hardly Mailer's strength as a novelist anyhow; far more natural writers of dialogue can be found among our lesser figures—Salinger, Updike, and others; and yet the very stiffness here, talking at rather than to, squares in some sense with the larger plan of the book. In Mailer's later work there is only one character, the author, unwinding an inexhaustible but necessarily tiresome conversation with himself, a scheme that may strike the reader as imaginatively less daring than what was attempted in *Barbary Shore.*

I have spent time on the merely physical texture of the novel because it needs to be approached as a difficult work, slowly. Broadly speaking, we may consider it a "problem" book of a kind which looks increasingly central to our literature, the most notable early example being Melville's *The Confidence Man.* But we must not leave out of account the question of masks, which has a peculiar importance in Mailer's instance. He is, certainly, a man of many faces: in *Of a Fire on the Moon,* where he begins to write sentences that would make Carlyle blush, there are those sudden and rather tender moments about his disastrous private life, from which he is trying to escape through contemplation of a gigantic technological enterprise. To the extraliterary public he has become, according to plan, another Hemingway: more intelligent but just as well esteemed by those who do not ordinarily read fiction, just as sternly a champion of manhood, just as chronically unable to create a woman who lives on the written page. It is one part of his charm that the disguises should go on and come off at such a frightening rate. Yet, in a queer way, *Barbary Shore* appears to be the one place in which public relations were for a time abandoned. The amnesiac solitude of the postwar years has its oblique reflection in a book which reads like a meditation on Eliot's line, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins."

If *Leaves of Grass* remains our great original poem, and *Huckleberry Finn* our novel, we can see at once how considerably writers like Bellow and Mailer have swerved from the secure American consciousness which begins and ends in nature, and which was still going strong in the work of Hemingway and Faulkner. Could Mailer even hope to imitate the pastoral reductions of "Big Two-Hearted River"? The shift to novelists who begin and end in cities may at one time have looked complete, yet it will probably appear in the long run to have been a temporary phenomenon, or at any rate one tendency among others. This was forcibly brought home to me some years ago in reading William Gass's fine short story, "In the Heart of the Heart of the Country," where something of the weight of the oldest American wonder is restored. Gass's story, though, is a curiously detached pastoral, the product of a consciousness deliberately held separate from the things around it, and so rather metaphysical in its celebration of the simply physical. This, I should think, is becoming a characteristic American mode: metaphysical musings on the physical fact. Yet it is to be found chiefly not in fiction but in poetry, for our poets have discovered selves more natural in every sense than those of our novelists, and their triumphs as a result are nowhere near so equivocal. In discussing some of the recent turns in American poetry I shall try to quote generously, since poets, even when their achievement is more substantial, tend to be less anxiously followed than novelists.

Before entering on so large and fruitful a subject one ought perhaps to apologize for that part of it which one does not intend to speak about. I refer to the school of "confessional" poetry, which counts among its practitioners our most widely honored and indeed our most faithfully read poets. This school, after an interesting start in Robert Lowell's *Life Studies,* has gradually assumed the status of a Church of the Self, encour-

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aging all that is most static and least inventive in any number of poetic selves. The very newest volumes by Lowell, and by the late John Berryman, do not lead me to modify this opinion—quite the contrary. But I have written about such things elsewhere, and will leave the floor to another critic, Harold Bloom, who makes the point concisely in a recent afterword to his survey of English Romanticism.

> Our disease is not so much alienation as it is solipsism, and the subject of modern poetry is endlessly solipsism, or more simply the hopeless question: why is there no subject? There is a recent fashion for confessional verse, stemming from the conversion of Lowell's style that took place in *Life Studies*. The fallacy of the fashion, and even of its distinguished inventor, is that confessional verse is indeed too easy, vulgar, and disgusting when all verse is necessarily afflicted by self-consciousness anyway. The obliqueness of *The Auroras of Autumn* is self-revelatory, while the directness of Lowell's recent volumes is not. The old man walking the twilight beach, oppressed by creative loss and pondering the lesson of the northern lights, is as genuinely open to our understanding as the perplexed poet confronting the leach-gatherer was, but the middle-aged man shown in all the personal, even clinical detail that a wry nobility turns against itself remains as opaque to our apprehension as he is to his own.

To this one merely adds that Lowell has been from the first essentially a poet of public themes, and that the greatest difficulty of his continuing self-exposure will be an ennui which he shares with his readers—ennui which, as Baudelaire reminds us, can swallow the whole world in an enormous yawn.

The figure of Wallace Stevens looms behind much of what is now alive in our poetry, but one may venture that it is the Stevens of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" rather than "The Auroras." To describe the qualities of this long reflective poem would be a hopeless undertaking: it is the only thing of its kind in Stevens's later work, a poem made with complete authority, yet it has nothing of the rhetorical wit, the doctrinaire huff, of Stevens's shorter poems of the 1940s. One may bear in mind the metaphysical celebration of a physical world, a process which the poem explicates and demonstrates in the same stroke.

> The mobile and the immobile flickering
> In the area between is and was are leaves,
> Leaves burnished in autumnal burnished trees
>
> And leaves in whirlings in the gutters, whirlings
> Around and away, resembling the presence of thought,
> Resembling the presences of thoughts, as if,
>
> In the end, in the whole psychology, the self,
> The town, the weather, in a casual litter,
> Together, said words of the world are the life of the world.

Why a poetry of this tone should have become so influential I cannot with any certainty say: among Stevens's longer poems "The Auroras," "Sunday Morning," and "The Man with the Blue Guitar" all seem to me plainly greater. There may, however, be a hint in Stevens's own correspondence, where he remarks of "An Ordinary Evening" that "my interest is to try to get as close to the ordinary, the commonplace and the ugly as it is possible for a poet to get. It is not a question of grim reality but of plain reality. The object is of course to purge oneself of anything false." It is the distance rather than the closeness here that strikes a reader—a distance that evidently liberates the poet from his visual subject while fixing him to his visionary theme. About the purging Stevens is surely correct. Lowell's confessional worries protect the most impenetrable of masks, but the remoteness of any mask from Stevens's poem helps to purify it, and sets the self bare in a way far deeper than the autobiographical. It cannot be fortuitous that one recurs al-

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ways to the sense of possible masks, necessary selves: this is the abiding concern of our literature, and the relative success of our poets in dealing with it is what makes them worth reading.

John Ashbery, to take one example, has lately emerged as a strong individual voice, after a somewhat zany interim volume called *The Tennis Court Oath*. Extended quotation from almost any of his better poems will show how much authority he takes from the one aspect of Stevens which I have tried to illustrate. Consider the last few lines of a mysterious and lovely poem, "Definition of Blue," which begins with an unlikely trope —"The rise of capitalism parallels the advance of romanticism/ And the individual is dominant until the close of the nineteenth century"—and then proceeds to extrapolate from history a given moment, and from the perception of historical trends the perception of separate shapes and colors.

> Each new diversion adds its accurate touch
> to the ensemble, and so
> A portrait, smooth as glass, is built up out
> of multiple corrections
> And it has no relation to the space or time
> in which it was lived.
> Only its existence is a part of all being, and
> is therefore, I suppose, to be prized
> Beyond chasms of night that fight us
> By being hidden and present.
>
> And yet it results in a downward motion, or
> rather a floating one
> In which the blue surroundings drift slowly
> up and past you
> To realize themselves some day, while you,
> in this nether world that could not be
> better
> Waken each morning to the exact value of
> what you did and said, which remains.

Ashbery is the possessor, among other things, of a terribly saturnine sense of humor together with a sense of burlesque, all of which reminds one a little of Keaton. These characteristics hover in the background of almost everything he writes, and they are there in "Definition of Blue"; but in those two closing lines the certainty, the weight, come from Stevens—though the superb rhythms belong, of course, to Ashbery alone. Out of such strange amalgams most of our surviving recent poetry has been made.

In poetry of an altogether different kind, influenced mainly, one would guess, by Hart Crane, and open at times to the apocalyptic impulse, there is yet a self-correction toward *abstracting just enough* which owes something to Stevens. I notice this in Alvin Feinman's "November Sunday Morning," to me a great poem, from which I quote a representative passage where the poet sees wonderingly

> That the actual streets I loitered in
> Lay lit like fields, or narrow channels
> About to open to a burning river;
> All brick and window vivid and calm
> As though composed in a rigid water
> No random traffiic would dispel . . .

The poem sounds like an experiment in defining urban pastoral, but Feinman, happily, is liberated from the compulsive ironies that used to be required of American poets. We feel, reading his poem, that this is the kind of thing our poetry now can do, and we are grateful for the change.

The central power is no longer Stevens, we seem to be encountering some more general influx into the poetic idiom, when W. S. Merwin, who once seemed a nature poet going against the currency of his contemporaries, can approach his subject in the startling manner of "Daybreak."

> Again this procession of the speechless
> Bringing me their words
> The future woke me with its silence
> I join the procession
> An open doorway
> Speaks for me
> Again

This is still nature poetry, though of an odd sort: not only has the poet's connection with the landscape broken off, even the landscape's integration of its own parts is uneasily tentative. Memory is the creative

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element here as in so much of recent American poetry, including the following example by Louis Simpson.

Trasimeno

When Hannibal defeated the Roman army
he stopped at Trasimeno.

That day, and the next, he marched no
further.
His tent lay in the moonlight,

his sword shone in the moonlight,
what thought kept him from moving, no one
knows.

Stranger, when you go to Rome,
when you have placed your hand in the gargoyle's mouth,

and walked in the alleys . . .
when you have satisfied your hunger for
stone,

at night you will return to the trees
and the ways of the barbarians,

hands, eyes, voices, ephemera,
shadows of the African horsemen.

In both style and substance the obvious source is Cavafy, and yet the tone of quiet resignation, which ought to be pure, is moralized in what must seem a peculiarly American fashion. Why does the poet appear fairly to serenade the barbarians who make his last image? But no matter, we admire even this as we admire the poem for its single and magical Whitmanesque catalogue, "hands, eyes, voices, ephemera."

It is not only the prophetic cadence of Whitman that matters—subdued but still audible in Simpson's poem, freer in the same author's "Walt Whitman at Bear Mountain," cacophonous throughout Allen Ginsberg's work—but also Emerson's settled preoccupation with the visual for its own sake, the disturbances of a random leaf or stone. Through Stevens this has come down to us very potently indeed, as in John Hollander's "Sunday A.M. Not in Manhattan," though more specifically this poet has in mind the insinuations of light which we wonder at in certain of Hopper's paintings. The first lines have set the scene, and the last offer a metaphysical gloss.

Lying longest, most still
Along the unsigned blank
Of sidewalk, the narrowed
Finger of shade left by
Something, thicker than trees,
Taller than these streetlamps,
Somewhere off to the right
Perhaps, and unlike an
Intrusion of ourselves,
Unseen, long, is claiming
It all, the scene, the whole.

It would be fanciful to discover Whitman behind such writing, but it is very much the generosity and the discrimination of Emerson's observing eye that is being imported here, with all appropriate urbanity, to the poetry of cities. So far, the enterprise has been carried through with varying degrees of success. Yet I think this is the kind of writing that may come to dominate the next generation of poets, as our cities devolve ever more rapidly into wildernesses. The new wilderness in its darkest negative image can be found in Hollander and also, powerfully, in Lowell: "For the Union Dead," "The Mouth of the Hudson," and many of the redeemable things in *Notebook*.

As quotation shows, however, where poetry about the city is most subtle it is still at the stage of test sighting, and one cannot yet say whether the major efforts will prove as astonishing as the minor. For such poetry, if it comes, the ultimate model is likely to be Thomas Cole's great series of paintings "The Course of Empire," and especially the last of the group, "Desolation," where Emerson's own contemporary beheld the sublime ruin to which the American dialectic of nature must lead. Meanwhile, the poetry that seems to be lasting is at once personal and reticent, both hiding and revealing more than we can know. Again I plead guilty to thinking this quality characteristically American, and again the paraphrase makes no sense without quotation.

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My parents rise out of their thrones
into the milky rooms of clouds. How can I sing?
Time tells me what I am. I change and I am the same.
I empty myself of my life and my life remains.

This is from Mark Strand's "The Remains," a poem typical enough, and extraordinary enough, to conclude my own privately culled *embarras de richesse*. I note in passing a slight echo of Theodore Roethke—"My secrets cry aloud./ I have no need for tongue./ My heart keeps open house,/ My doors are widely swung"—and my only reason for neglecting Roethke is that he has been rather widely written about already, and is getting at least some of the appreciation that he deserves along with the other sure poets of his generation, Elizabeth Bishop and Randall Jarrell. But Strand's echo is in any case more resonant than the original. He has emptied his life of his self and his self remains, beyond all need for disguise.

To impose some kind of order on the foregoing chaos of writers is a less difficult task than one might have feared. That is to say, the order really need not be imposed. If we think of two of the most diverse passages among those quoted, taken from Bellow and Strand respectively, we see that these personae are so closely related that they have no trouble crossing the boundary that separates poetry from prose. "I was open to feelings that had no obstacle in coming to cover me." "I empty myself of my life and my life remains." There is, after all, a part of Bellow that looks fairly close to the mask of Augie: it is the side of him we begin to understand when he cites Lawrence in interviews, saying that he, too, can live without an umbrella to shut out the sky. Bellow, then, in this aspect, was never far from the affirmations of Strand and Roethke and Whitman. And the more we read in American literature, the more we see of such identities.

It is rather a common practice to distinguish the visionary from the visual as I have done, but Stevens is referred to under both headings at different points in the discussion. This does not seem to me a contradiction. There is, surely, a case for reading Emerson, Whitman, Melville, and Stevens as our essential writers, and the one feature common to them all is their constant alternation between these two modes. Here also I arrive at what may seem a second oddity in these reflections: that I have spoken so much more of poets than of novelists. I confess that I do not feel at all guilty on this count, and my reason is that poets in recent years have written at extremes of our two modes in the best American manner, while novelists have not. They have chosen instead to explore the apocalyptic vein, writing death-of-the-novel novels about the death of the world, and demonstrating perhaps more convincingly than they had reckoned that theirs is a garbage apocalypse. These are strong words; they cannot apply to everyone. Nevertheless, let me offer an illustration.

If one feels disappointed with most fiction one will not naturally read much fiction. For myself, I read novels these days quite by chance, when friends or more rarely critics can persuade me. One that I read not long ago was Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins*. Now, a good many critics like Percy, and as I found there are good reasons for liking him. Yet something had gone wrong at the core of his book—wrong in what ought to be an unusual way. It was some time before I understood that Percy, indeed a skillful and even a charming writer, was lazy. Without having read his previous novels I surmise that this is not his best, and conclude that he is the victim of a trend. His predominant mood belongs to a pessimistic dreaminess, which brings on some genuinely inventive moments; the atmosphere is well managed and comes only in part from Browning's poem of a similar

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title; the futuristic setting has possibilities, or so one would think. Yet the novel is too long by half, the plot too thin, and for the rest, it is shot through with all manner of queer and specious allegorical devices, such as a war in South America being made to stand for the war in Vietnam so that we may receive all the details and relevancies thereof. Shortcomings like these in a talented writer have to do with some broader fashion, in which a leading role is played, I fear, by the lamentable simple heart Vonnegut.

There is another case of the same phenomenon in Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, which I read several years ago and thought energetic but hopeless. To judge by the articles in literary quarterlies this novel has now achieved the status of a classic, and why? It is scatological, it is pop, it is Faulkner updated. The best thing about the novel is its imitation of a pleasantly reeling drunkenness, but the groundlings of another age, if not the critics of our own, would have seen that the big hunt which is its climactic episode fails because it is a big fake—so much literary bull-bull, to quote Mailer himself in another context. However, I do not wish to prolong this any further: I mean simply to explain why some of us read less fiction than we might, and search for some of the qualities peculiar to fiction in modestly satisfying films like *Five Easy Pieces* and *The Last Picture Show*.

Unfortunately, the novelists (a few of the better ones) and not their former readers (roughly the same few) have defected. What we have lost in the process is a general recognition of the *disinterestedness* which is an essential condition of all worthwhile fiction, and which we find quietly beneath the surface in great literature of any kind. It was our shaky resolution in keeping to such disinterestedness that James might well have been considering when he made reference to the complex fate of the American writer. For what is meant by disinterestedness is precisely the ability to shed one's masks, and so to write from one point of view without closing off perspective, and while preserving and declaring one's own identity from another. This strength, a strength of sympathy and yet of individuality, has been rare enough in our literature. It is there intermittently in Bellow, and in some of Mailer's journalism; and it is starting to flourish, thank goodness, in our poetry. Still, I should like to single out a novel that moves close to the center of my concern, Mary McCarthy's *Birds of America*. Miss McCarthy is worried in an immediate way about nature, and in the long run about human nature. She marks how surely nature stands at the center of American civilization, she sees that Americans, in their restless attempt at self-definition, have made of it only a last frontier to conquer, and she is appalled. When it was birds that migrated we could at any rate spot them as a point of existence outside our own, and qualifying our own. Now, however, it is the migratory habits of hippies that most absorb the energies of an observer, a tourist research expert who puts one in mind of Bellow's Dr. Lal, and Miss McCarthy draws for her hero the necessary ethical consequence: there is a limiting, a narrowing down, a constriction of all life. Through this novel as through much of its author's recent work there runs a solemn expatriate pessimism which the rest of us cannot afford to share, but her point, so delicately made, about the crowding of human monads into a space once held by transcendent nature has its relevance to the survival not only of Americans but of American artists as well.

Perhaps the truest solace can be drawn once again from James, who, having fought through puzzling disguises more determinedly than most artists, discovered beneath them the romantic faith which a good number of his admirers have rejected. Though the great speech about "life" in *The Ambassadors* is delivered with a show of conscious humor, it is for James a speech

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without irony. Americans live for the moment and for themselves, and at best their way leads to a deeper identity. The worst thing about American art that evades its own identity is its absence of humor. As Lambert Strether remarks to the young man who would too soberly take his example, "prepare yourself, while you're about it, to be more amusing." But occasionally, occasionally, during the past twenty very odd years, American art has gone past the sobriety that preceded Strether's own conversion, and has realized its particular being unenhanced. "One's cry," Stevens magnificently says, "of O Jerusalem becomes little by little a cry to something a little nearer and nearer until at last one cries out to a living name, a living place, a living thing, and in crying out confesses openly all the bitter secretions of experience." □

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Lewis Coser

The Intellectual as Celebrity

A new intellectual type has risen on the American scene, the *celebrity intellectual.* He addresses a semieducated mass public that makes little claim to expert knowledge or refined taste, and that adheres to no commonly shared cultural standards. The celebrity intellectuals, figures like Erich Segal, Charles Reich, and Marshall McLuhan, come to the fore under identifiable conditions and exhibit a distinct set of relations with an admiring public.

Societies like our own are characterized by a pronounced segmentation of social and intellectual circles.[1] Florian Znaniecki has developed the notion that thinkers are likely to speak not to the total society but to a selected public. Specific social circles, he argued, bestow recognition, provide material or psychic income, and help shape the self-image of the thinker as he internalizes their normative expectations. Men of knowledge are supposed to respond to or anticipate certain demands of their circles and these in turn grant certain rights and immunities. Men of ideas, he argued further, define data and problems in terms of actual or anticipated audiences. Thus thinkers may be classified in terms of their public and of the performances expected of them within these contexts. Such circles, in short, provide the setting for informal social control.[2]

An academic intellectual seeks his audience among fellow academics, and his contributions are shaped through exchanges with academic colleagues.[3] He is relatively unconcerned with the evaluation of, say unattached and nonacademic intellectuals; he does not grant them the claim to make judgments about his intellectual work. At the most, such outside appraisals are given only peripheral attention. Even the message conveyed by the "unattached intellectuals" described by Karl Mannheim,[4] who are less tied to specific circles than the types described by Znaniecki and whose audience is not as rigorously defined or confined, is mediated by a closer group of peers and expert judges of status. It is these peers and judges whose opinions the "unattached intellectuals" esteem and to whom they grant near-exclusive claims for critical evaluation of their work.

By contrast, the celebrity intellectual does not address a delimited circle of peers, or an appreciative public of specifically trained connoisseurs, but an educated or semiedu-

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[1] Cf. Kurt H. Wolff, ed. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York: Free Press, 1950), *passim.* For a modern extension of these views see Charles Kadushin, "The Friends and Supporters of Psychotherapy: On Social Circles in Urban Life," *American Sociological Review,* December 1966, pp. 786–802.

[2] Florian Znaniecki, *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968, new ed.), and my Introduction to this volume.

[3] Cf. Lewis A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971).

[4] Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1936), and "The Problem of the Intelligentsia" in *Essays on the Sociology of Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956).

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cated public at large. He short-circuits, so to speak, the arduous and complicated process through which other intellectuals attempt to gain recognition among qualified judges. Instead, he appeals to an amorphous general public from which he craves acclaim.

Since his audience has no specific expert knowledge and is not held together by common canons of taste, the celebrity intellectual is able to escape the social controls habitually exercised by intellectual or social circles. His public does not have enough in common to be capable of judging his intellectual work in the way, for example, an academic public judges the products of academic research, or in which cultured groups judge a novel.

The fact that this general audience makes no claim to expert knowledge or cultivated taste does not mean that it has no effect on the celebrity intellectual. Quite the contrary. Although it can hardly influence the quality of his work by applying substantive standards, it is likely to judge it in terms of what may be called "appeal qualities," such as "novelty" or "brilliance." This has important consequences. Since such qualities are not likely to afford long-term satisfaction, they foster a well-nigh insatiable appetite for "more" of the same. Novelty, brilliance, and abundance may, then, be taken provisionally as some of the hallmarks of the celebrity intellectual.

THE EMERGENCE of the celebrity intellectual in the postwar years can be traced to three related occurrences. First, the coming of age of an unprecedentedly large college-educated middle class, providing a market for new and relatively sophisticated cultural commodities. This new public differs from the older college-educated stratum in significant ways. The relative homogeneity of cultural standards among the older college graduates has been replaced by an enormous heterogeneity whose only common denominator is the certification by which these men or women are said to be Bachelors or Masters of Arts or holders of professional degrees. These people regard the acquisition of status through the consumption of some "high" culture a basic requirement. But a genuine immersion in high culture requires considerable effort, and all these people desire is an effortless acquisition of its outward trappings,[5] an easy and quick way of being "in the know," or "with it." Whether in the realm of drug-induced stimuli or of cultural consumption, what they crave is instant gratification. This is precisely what the mass media attempt to provide. The development of the new media of communication corresponds to the emergence of a wide college-educated public. These new media, especially TV, are able to service an enormous mass market at relatively low cost, realizing appreciable economies of scale; and they can provide the required cultural commodities for both low-brow fare and for the more sophisticated repertoire desired by the college-educated. Moreover, competition with the new media lead to the rapid transformation of older media to serve the needs of the new half-educated public. Robert Brustein summarizes these developments very well:

> Soon, Hollywood discovered there were big grosses to be had from movies based on serious literature, and not just "Anthony Adverse" or "Gone with the Wind" . . . the literary and academic celebrities thus created were being toasted on a host of television talk shows; *Playboy* and *Esquire* started folding short stories and short literary interviews between the pages of their cartoons and nude photographs, while *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* slipped in poetry, stories and reviews among their clothing, cosmetic and jewelry ads; and prominent personalities began enjoying incomes of more than $100,000 from lecture tours alone. We were into an age where the appetite for fame joined the hunger for money as the decisive factor in the direction of many careers and every-

[5] On the notion of effortlessness, cf. David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), and *Abundance for What?* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964).

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body who could hold a pen was in a position to be as famous as a movie star.[6]

This being the demands of the new market, a host of intellectuals who had previously considered themselves to be serious rush in to supply cultural commodities in tune with the needs of the new audience. Some are still marked by ambivalence in regard to their new roles, and given to comparing their old reference anchorage in restricted circles with their new roles and audience. Others manage fully to internalize the demands of the new public and hence escape the torture of ambivalence.

The products of the celebrity intellectuals are not mediated through an intellectual give-and-take in identifiable circles. Their appeal is to an unidentifiable and heterogeneous audience that has no other way of responding than through popularity ratings. Without shared cultural standards, this audience relies overwhelmingly on cosmetic rather than substantive criteria. What counts is not content or truth, but "novelty" or "brilliance."

To be sure, in itself the introduction of such formal criteria in the evaluation of intellectual products is not new. It has developed gradually with the spread of intellectual products to an increasingly wider and more undifferentiated audience. Robert Nisbet has shown that the search for "brilliance" was already quite marked in the 18th century,[7] flourishing in the salons of Paris and the coffeehouses of London at a time when for the first time a broad audience emerged for men of ideas. This wider public—though it did not yet abandon other criteria of evaluation such as mastery of a subject, depth, and accuracy—was peculiarly fascinated by those aspects of style that could be seen as "brilliant" or "novel." Even in writers as great as Voltaire, Diderot, or Samuel Johnson, this new public criterion became one of the reasons for their enormous success.

The structural conditions pressing for the emphasis on novelty and brilliance, though already partly at work a century or two ago, have become perfected only in recent times, so that in our days, "Brilliance has become . . . the most cherished, sought-after, carefully calculated, and profitably traded adjective in the lexicon." [8] Although 18th- or 19th-century intellectuals tried to come to terms with the new public that appeared with the increase in literacy, they were still tied to their own circles of cultural producers and consumers, as I have attempted to show elsewhere.[9] Whether they be salons or academies, bohemias or particular publications catering to identifiable consumers or peers, these circles helped to structure intellectual life in distinctive ways and insured the differentiation of cultural offerings. As late as the first half of our own century, distinctions between high-brow, middle-brow, and low-brow culture were still clearly in evidence. Although such criteria as "novelty" and "brilliance" began to be introduced with the emergence of a wider public, they continued to be held in check through the elaboration of more substantive standards of excellence, institutionalized in particular circles in which men of knowledge continued to live and work.

In more recent times, however, the path has been opened up for a type of intellectual who can free himself from the control of standards embedded in distinct cultural circles and personified by distinctive status judges. He can bypass them, so to speak, and address himself directly to an undifferentiated public of superficially educated consumers. These large masses of men and women are not equipped to judge the ac-

[6] Robert Brustein, "If an Artist Wants to Be Serious and Respected and Rich, Famous and Popular, He Is Suffering from Cultural Schizophrenia," *New York Times Magazine*, September 26, 1971.
[7] Robert Nisbet, "What Is an Intellectual?" *Commentary*, December 1965, pp. 93–101.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Lewis A. Coser, *Men of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1965).

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curacy, the mastery or depth of a contribution, but they are sufficiently well-educated to judge a work in terms of surface characteristics of style and presentation. They are likely to ask not whether what is asserted is true or significant, but whether it is startling. What counts among them is not whether a work contributes understanding or knowledge, but whether it provides the shock and *frisson* of brilliant novelty.

While older, highly institutionalized circles tended to be conservative in their judgments and were so disinclined to recognize innovation as to become a source of neophobia—the loose and general public of the mass media provides the conditions for *neophilia,* that is, a one-sided value emphasis on what is new. In otherwise heterogeneous audiences, only the new and the brilliant can provide suitable conversation pieces, allowing everyone to display his recently acquired knowledge as a badge of status. And since members of the new public sometimes suffer from boredom in the quotidian routines of their lives, they particularly value those cultural producers who engage in a search for new stimulants to revive jaded intellectual or aesthetic palates. Brilliant novelty becomes a tension-reducing anodyne.

It might be objected that celebrity intellectuals do not address their generalized public directly, but that their contributions are mediated through television commentators, talk-show hosts, media executives, and the like. This objection only strengthens my point. Such intermediaries, far from being independent evaluators, are in fact gatekeepers who will allow entrance to all whom they judge as agreeable to the audience they serve. Far from being cultured judges of the intellect, like some literary critics, they are of uncertain cultural background, live above their intellectual means, and are disposed, like the public they serve, to value the new above the significant. They are forever in pursuit of red-hot novelty.

Given this "tradition of the new," to reshape somewhat Harold Rosenberg's phrase, it stands to reason that the time span in which celebrity intellectuals can hold the limelight is extremely short. The new of yesterday rapidly becomes the old of today, so that the effective exposure time of the celebrity intellectual is likely to be very brief. To the extent that he is aware of this, he is inclined to make the most of the moment allotted to him and to pile into it as much as he possibly can. This, as well as the insatiable demands of the public, may account for the frantic pace characteristic of these men, who compress into a few years an output of writing, lecturing, interviews, and TV appearances that for others could be spaced over a lifetime. What is more, since intellectuals can produce significant work only when it is matured over fairly long periods of incubation, the celebrity intellectual has to repeat himself and produce variations of essentially the same idea. He is under structural pressure to go off half-cocked, that is, to offer opinions and ideas that have but little grounding in mature reflection. He must keep trying to raise the ante so that subsequent utterances often seem like self-parodies of earlier ones. No longer guided, if he ever was, by the disciplined criteria of inquiry and assertion emanating from a circle of colleagues and peers, he is pushed, and not just by happenstance, to make a fool of himself in the effort to grab the mike.

Forced at all times to compete for attention with celebrities who are not intellectuals, the celebrity intellectual runs in a very crowded field. The *Celebrity Register* lists its 2,200 biographies in alphabetical order so that Polly Adler comes after Mortimer Adler and Bertrand Russell is followed by Jane Russell.[10] Given such competition, the celebrity intellectual is driven to stunts and feats that will keep attention focused on him. Since he tends to become a performer among other performers, these, and not other intellectuals, become his reference group.

[10] See Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image* (New York: Atheneum, 1962), p. 58.

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Even if he has attained his position in the limelight by what serious intellectuals judged to be an intellectual accomplishment, he may soon be reduced to performances that are no longer intellectual at all. Here Gordon Allport's principle of functional autonomy comes into play: specific forms of behavior become, under certain conditions, ends or goals in themselves, although they were only means at an earlier stage.[11] Whereas the cultivation of brilliance may at first have been a device to draw attention to the qualities of the intellectual product, it tends later to be cultivated in itself.

TV, as well as "sophisticated" illustrated magazines such as *Esquire* or *Playboy,* are the media par excellence for performers. They offer rewards of exposure and applause, not an intensive exchange of ideas. Consequently, once the intellectual becomes a performer he no longer gains gratification from reciprocal exchanges with his audience, nor does he experience the delight that emerges through consensus between author and public. He derives most of his gratification from an ever-renewed exhibitionism, as insatiable in him as in his audience. This exhibitionistic behavior, it needs to be stressed, is not necessarily part of his psychological makeup; it is a response to his structural position.

To keep up with the competition, the celebrity intellectual must constantly refashion his personality in a way that appeals to the consumer. Hence he comes to resemble the salesgirl on the personality market of whom C. Wright Mills wrote that she "must not only sell her time and energy; she must also 'sell herself.' For in the personality market, the personality itself, along with advertising, becomes the instrument of an alien purpose." [12] In our case, since the celebrity is "known only for his well-knownness," [13] this purpose is simply the need for keeping one's competitive standing within the ranks of celebrities.

The celebrity intellectual must forever try to be "with it" because his status depends on his ability to contribute brilliantly to the set of ideas currently defined as "novel," "advanced," or "progressive." But precisely this leads to the ever-present danger of becoming rapidly obsolescent. As Dean Inge noted a while ago, he who would marry the spirit of the times is soon likely to become a widower. The more the celebrity intellectual proclaims his allegiance to whatever conceit is currently the latest, the more likely it is that he will soon be surpassed by a new celebrity, intellectual or not, who manages to attach himself to ideas that are even more recent and hence even more "advanced."

In the romantic age there arose the idea of the genius, the direct ancestor of the creative hero of avant-garde modernism. It was then assumed, as Hegel once put it, that in case of "conflict between genius and his public, it must be the public that is to blame . . . the only obligation the artist can have is to follow truth and his genius." [14] But with the celebrity intellectual, this statement has to be reversed. In case of a conflict between him and his public, it is he who is felt to deserve the blame. Having failed to satisfy the public's taste, he deserves the penalty of oblivion.

The contributions of the celebrity intellectual, it turns out, tend to be judged in terms not of their use value but of their exchange value on the market of intellectual commodities. They assume a fetishistic character, being weighed not for their intrinsic worth but for their public rating. As literary critic Leonard Kriegel has put it, the cultural market is "gobbling up the contemporary before it can even establish its presence." [15] Or,

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[11] Cf. Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968, enlarged ed.), p. 15.
[12] C. Wright Mills, *Power, Politics and People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963; Ballantine Books, n.d.), p. 271.
[13] Boorstin, *The Image,* p. 57.
[14] Quoted in Irving Howe, *Decline of the New* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970), p. 8.
[15] Leonard Kriegel, *Edmund Wilson* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 88.

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as another literary critic, William Phillips, writes,

> Ideas are dissolved into styles, and everything is gobbled up by publicity and co-opted . . . into entertainment. . . . When I heard Germaine Greer was guest host for Dick Cavett, all I could think of was that she was a natural for TV. . . . But can you imagine Rosa Luxembourg [sic] on Johnny Carson's show? [16]

The promotion director of a large publishing house, Simon and Schuster, summed it all up in a recent interview in the *New York Times* (Dec. 31, 1971): "The more an author is known as a celebrity, the more personal promotion helps. The more serious, the more scholarly, the more literary a book is, the less author appearances matter." The first thing broadcast interviewers look for, he suggested, "is an author who is a celebrity, somebody whose name is known beyond the book."

Here follow the portraits of three celebrity intellectuals.

ERICH SEGAL, a professor of classics at Yale, was fairly inconspicuous until recently. His scholarly work was mainly concerned with translations of Roman plays and commentaries on Latin authors. But in the last few years he suddenly started writing successful pop songs, collaborated on screenplays for such movies as *The Yellow Submarine,* and, more recently, achieved bestsellerdom (almost 500,000 copies sold) with the sentimental novel *Love Story,* which was soon made into an even more successful movie. In recent years, Segal, usually attired in the latest mod style, has been seen on innumerable talk shows, delivering a variety of "with it" comments. As Robert Brustein writes, "In Segal, the media interviewers had found the perfect patsy—a performer willing to play the fool on demand in return for continued exposure in front of the public." [17] His case is of interest not because Segal in his new *persona* pretended to major contributions in the world of ideas, but because it illustrates the tensions that arise in men suddenly caught between old and new standards.

To interviewers who asked him why and if he had given up his scholarly calling he replied that he had by no means done so, that he was still a scholar at heart. To others he would say that his trashy novel was in fact a contribution to literature. At times he is known to rant at "a lot of pseudointellectuals in New York, who put me down at cocktail parties." After students who at first admired him as a teacher who had managed to work with the Beatles now put him down as having sold out to the mass media, Segal availed himself of further recourse to TV shows and film festivals in order to "explain himself." It is all rather sad. In the words of Robert Brustein, "he remains a victim of the culture he had fed on, schizoid to the last, stranded between two worlds, able to sacrifice neither." [18]

While Segal is a transitional type, nearer in certain respects to an older type of man, once found on the fringes of Hollywood, who succumbs to the lure of the media and craves celebrity status while yet being unwilling to sever connections with the world of serious ideas, the other two intellectuals to be discussed are closer to the new type. Operating without visible pangs of conscience as celebrity intellectuals, they seem to feel that they offer the public not just entertainment but profound and novel intellectual fare.

WHEN CHARLES A. REICH'S *The Greening of America* burst upon the scene in 1970, its author was practically unknown to the larger

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[16] William Phillips, in *Partisan Review,* Spring 1971, p. 142.

[17] Robert Brustein, "If an Artist Wants to Be Serious. . . ."

[18] *Ibid.*

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public. A professor of law at Yale, his contributions were restricted mainly to the law journals. His publisher initially seems not to have expected major sales for this book, and orders for the first as well as for the second printing were only for 5,000 copies. Nor was there a concerted commercial promotion campaign. But all of a sudden the *New Yorker,* for reasons unknown, decided to reprint large excerpts from the book and, within a week, it became a tremendous success, the talk of the town. The *New York Times* in turn gave the book its accolade by reprinting excerpts and running a number of comments pro and con, in addition to its regular review. The austere *London Times* soon followed suit. For a few months it was all but impossible to look at a mass culture magazine or a TV show without encountering the theme of *The Greening of America.* What then had Reich wrought?

What he had provided was essentially a pop version of an interpretation of human destiny that has been part of the underground currents of mythical ideas ever since the late 12th century. At that time the semiheretical Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore had prophesized the imminent coming of a new historical order, in which the Church of Christ would be superseded by the reign of the Holy Ghost on earth, and most of mankind's ills would be cured. The reign of the Son was born of the reign of the Father, he taught, and it would soon be followed by a new order of perfection, the reign of the Holy Ghost on earth. Love on earth, love from the heart would replace the stern laws of both Testaments and usher in a millenarian age of human bliss. Reich duplicated this vision by his periodization of history into the old orders of Consciousness I and II, soon to be followed by redemption in Consciousness III.

Marx once remarked that historical happenings tend to repeat themselves, that which was enacted once as historical tragedy being reenacted as farce. Exactly what happened here. The millenarian desires for a perfect universe of love reappear in Reich's pop version, but the earnest yearnings of the millenarians have become utterly trivialized. The term "consciousness" is never clearly defined; it is, among others, so we are told, "the whole man; his 'head'; his way of life. It is that by which he creates his own life and thus creates the society in which he lives." As to the rest, it is, above all, an embarrassingly crude celebration of the "new"—of protest, drugs, Woodstock festivals, and liberated life styles. It is a rhapsody to the antinomian, a bathetic celebration of spontaneity and pastoral bliss. The reasoning is shoddy to the extreme and the evidence painfully wanting. "We know," says Reich, "what causes crime and social disorder, and what can be done to eliminate those causes."

The very reception of the book utterly falsified some of its premises, such as the plaintive assertion that "the media systematically deny any fundamentally different or dissenting point of view a chance to be heard at all." The book feeds parasitically on other modish writers, from Marcuse to Keniston to Cleaver. Yet it was hailed as a major breakthrough in puffs by John Galbraith and Justice William Douglas. Senator McGovern found it "one of the most gripping, penetrating and revealing analyses of American society I have yet seen," and the *Washington Post* believed it to be a "brilliant synthesis of contemporary ideas." [19]

The point is not that all reviews were laudatory. *Time,* for example, called it, "A colloidal suspension of William Buckley, William Blake and Herbert Marcuse in pure applesauce." It is rather that the book was nowhere, among friends and foes alike, submitted to the kind of critical scrutiny that would have been normal had it emerged within a specific intellectual circle. Once it had been publicized in the *New Yorker,* the influential taste-makers of the media treated

[19] All these puffs can be found on the backcover of the paperback edition.

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it as the work of a celebrity, as a book primarily known for its well-knownness. But such fame is short-lived. Some six months after the appearance of the book, a British writer, Henry Fairlie, met the editor of the *New Yorker* and made a passing allusion to the greening of New York during the St. Patrick's Day parade. William Shawn, the *New Yorker* editor, remarked in reply: "That all seems so long ago. I don't mean only in time, the months that have passed. The whole mood is so remote now. It was a last whimper. . . ." [20]

One doubts whether Reich himself would consider his work a major breakthrough in the world of ideas. But such is clearly the case with Marshall McLuhan, who seems the purest incarnation of the celebrity intellectual yet to appear on the American scene. Not only have others compared him to Darwin, Pavlov, Freud, Newton, and Einstein,[21] but he gives the impression of having made their judgment his own.

MCLUHAN was born in Edmonton, Alberta, in 1911. His father made his living as a real estate salesman. His Scottish-Irish parents were of Baptist and Methodist faith, but he became a Catholic convert in his twenties. After initial studies in English literature at the University of Manitoba, McLuhan went abroad to Trinity Hall, Cambridge University, to study under such figures as I. A. Richards and F. R. Leavis. He received his Ph.D. with a dissertation on the Elizabethan writer Thomas Nashe. In the next 15 years, McLuhan followed a fairly conventional academic career. He began his teaching at the University of Wisconsin and joined the staff of a Catholic institution, St. Louis University, after his conversion in 1937. He returned to Canada in 1944 to teach at Assumption University in Windsor, Ontario. Two years later he joined the faculty of St. Michael's College, the Roman Catholic unit of the University of Toronto, with which he has been associated ever since, having been promoted to full professor in 1952.

Up to the 1950s McLuhan published almost exclusively in scholarly and literary reviews, contributing papers on Poe, Tennyson, Kipling, Pound, Joyce, Eliot, as well as on Elizabethan writers, to such magazines as *Sewanee Review* and *Kenyon Review*. His first book, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man,* appeared in 1951, just a year before he received his promotion. A vividly written assault on the mass media in general and on advertising in particular, it attacked the "pressures set up around us today by the mechanical agencies of the press, radio, movies, and advertising." Though a sharp departure from his previous writings, the book may still be considered a not untypical product of a Catholic intellectual steeped in the classics of English literature and the prophets of modernity, who reacted with horror to the decline in standards and taste during the age of mass consumption. At that time McLuhan clung fastidiously to the somewhat elitist cultural standards he had absorbed at Cambridge. *The Mechanical Bride* is a book that Ortega y Gasset would have appreciated. The book was sparsely reviewed, and only attained an underground reputation among critics of mass culture.

In the 1950s McLuhan directed a seminar on culture and communications at the University of Toronto sponsored by the Ford Foundation and, together with the anthropologist Edmund Carpenter, edited the periodical *Explorations,* largely devoted to unconventional and highly imaginative analyses of mass communications. Late in the '50s McLuhan's reputation as a specialist in communications had spread across the Canadian border, bringing him an appointment for 1959–60 as director of a media project for the U.S. Office of Education and the National Association of Educational Broad-

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[20] Henry Fairlie, "The Practice of Puffers," *Encounter,* August 1971, pp. 3–13. I have relied heavily on this fine essay.
[21] Gerald E. Stearn, ed., *McLuhan Hot and Cool* (New York: Dial, 1967), p. xv.

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casters. In the '50s, then, McLuhan had broadened his audience, moving from the world of English literature to circles interested in communications—a subject that attracted widespread attention at that time.

But only in the 1960s did McLuhan emerge in the limelight. *The Gutenberg Galaxy,* his first successful book, was published in 1962; here he first expounded his well-known thesis that when print replaced oral communication, the eye rather than the ear became the principal sensory organ. With the dawn of the electronic age, however, linear thinking based on print was pushed into the background. This brought about a heightening of sensory awareness. Two years later, in *Understanding Media,* he extended his previous thesis and attempted to show why and how the new electronic media restructured modern civilization in a profoundly revolutionary sense. Another volume, *The Medium Is the Massage,* followed in 1967.[22]

With the publication of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* McLuhan became a celebrity. In addition to addressing innumerable gatherings ranging all the way from the PEN Congress to the Public Relations Society of America and the Modern Language Association, he was a sought-after guest at talk shows and other TV events. CBS produced a recording of *The Medium Is the Massage,* NBC presented an hour-long documentary on his work, and CBS interviewed him on its top-rated Sunday night public-affairs show. To cap it all, he was appointed to the Albert Schweitzer Chair in Humanities at Fordham University, which pays $100,000 a year for salary and for staff expenses (to my knowledge no commentator at the time pointed to the irony that this chair was meant to honor one of the great introspective, "withdrawn" figures of our time).

In the 1960s there was hardly a magazine * that failed to deal extensively with McLuhan's theses. Whether *Time* or *Life, The National Review* or *Commentary, Popular Photography* or the *Times Literary Supplement,* all made an attempt to interpret him. *Understanding Media* quickly went from a hard-cover edition priced at $8.50 to a paperback edition priced at $1.95 to a drugstore paperback edition selling at 95 cents. More than 100,000 copies were sold. *The Medium Is the Massage* sold about 200,000 copies.

Corporation executives, in the advertising industry and elsewhere, soon clutched McLuhan to their collective bosoms. IBM, General Electric, Bell Telephone, The Container Corporation flew him from one city to the next to talk to their hierarchs about the electronic future. A San Francisco advertising executive, Howard Gossage, became his unofficial publicity agent, advertising him as "an Archimedes who has given the ad industry levers to move the world."[23] One corporation offered him $5,000 to present a closed-circuit television lecture on how the products of its industry would be used in the future. Two national magazines offered him permanent offices in their buildings, plus fees, to do occasional consulting work. He had an office at Time, Inc., and wrote arti-

[22] For biographical information, see, Raymond Rosenthal, ed., *McLuhan: Pro and Con* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968), pp. 15–22.

* Not DISSENT—Ed.

[23] Harry H. Crosby and George Bond, eds., *The McLuhan Explosion* (New York: American Book Co., 1968), p. 167.

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cles for *Look* on such topics as "The Future of Sex" (co-authored by a *Look* editor).[24]

Tom Wolfe, the fashionable journalist, once witnessed a conversation between McLuhan and Gossage, the publicity agent. Gossage: "Listen, there are so many people willing to invest money in your work now, you'll never have to grade papers again." McLuhan: "You mean it's going to be fun from now on?" Gossage: "Everything's coming up roses." [25]

What accounts for this craze? To begin with, as a perceptive critic has remarked, "Fame and adulation of this proportion are only granted to someone who tells people something they already want to hear." [26] *The Mechanical Bride,* with its savage indictment of modern mass culture, it will be recalled, had only a very modest impact. The more recent books, in contrast, celebrate the electronic revolution and indicate, to quote Bernard Rosenberg,[27] that its author has now married the mechanical bride. The public at large took to McLuhan only after he had taken to the mass culture that public espoused. His celebration of the electronic media served to allay residual feelings of inadequacy the public may still have harbored over its immersion in the delights of nonlinear sensory stimulations. McLuhan legitimized pleasures that were heretofore indulged in only with greater or lesser uneasiness.

Yet legitimation of the media had been attempted earlier by others, with much less success. McLuhan had an advantage over them; he legitimized the existing state of affairs by having recourse to the language of novelty. "Newness as a norm or a criterion of value," the literary critic Geoffrey Wagner has written, "is the quickest and most convenient concession to the dominant technology." [28] By using a deliberately new vocabulary of sloganized and easily remembered catch phrases like "The Medium Is the Message," McLuhan gave his public the impression of learning something profoundly new while exerting minimal effort. He seemed to give instant knowledge, an immediate shock of recognition.

Many critics have pointed out the innumerable logical fallacies, the almost ludicrous distortions, to which McLuhan had recourse. Thus when he says, for example, that "with film you are the camera . . . but with TV you are the screen," this may seem very perceptive at first—until you realize that something like 80 percent of TV material consists of film. "The content of a movie," says McLuhan, "is a novel or a play or an opera." This sounds at first blush like a fine illustration of the thesis that the medium is indeed the message since, if the content of a medium is always derived from another medium, the only real innovation is the technology of each. Upon reflection, however, it turns out that many of the greatest achievements in film-making, like the works of Bergman, Fellini or Antonioni, or the comedies of Keaton and Chaplin, are not based on novels, plays, or operas.[29]

When such outrageous examples are cited to defenders of McLuhan, the reply always turns out to be that his insights are not meant to be right or wrong; they are meant to be "stimulating." McLuhan himself refers to his writings as "probes." But what is a probe? More often than not, a statement for which there is no evidence or which flies in the face of obvious facts.

At this point a personal reminiscence

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[24] *Ibid.,* p. 166; see also Tom Wolfe, *The Pump House Gang* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), pp. 110 and 130.
[25] Tom Wolfe, *The Pump House Gang,* p. 129.
[26] Neil Compton, "The Paradox of Marshall McLuhan," in Rosenthal, ed., *McLuhan: Pro and Con,* p. 107.
[27] Personal Communication.
[28] Geoffrey Wagner, "Misunderstanding Media: Obscurity as Authority," in Rosenthal, *McLuhan: Pro and Con,* p. 159.
[29] Dwight Macdonald, "Running It up the Totem Pole," in Rosenthal, ed., *McLuhan: Pro and Con,* p. 33.

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might be in order. A few years ago I attended a small seminar in which McLuhan asserted, *inter alia,* that new technological inventions are reflected in the writing styles of great literary figures, so that "you cannot understand the style of Swift without realizing that he wrote in the age of the spinning jenny." When I pointed out to him that Swift had died several decades before the invention of the spinning jenny, there came the amazing reply, delivered with great self-assurance, "So, he anticipated it."

Closer textual analysis than can be attempted here would reveal that the ratio of sense to nonsense in the writings of McLuhan has steadily decreased from the days of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* to his more recent work. The questionable "The Medium Is the Message"gave way to the absurdity of *The Medium Is the Massage.* In an effort to keep raising the ante, McLuhan increasingly parodied himself. But there comes a point for celebrity intellectuals when such tactics are counterproductive. The half-life of most of them is short indeed. Some of my freshman students have recently asked me with puzzled expressions, "Who is Marshall McLuhan?" McLunacy, having lasted some eight years, is over. What next?

THOUGH particular celebrity intellectuals pass from the scene, the type, I venture to think, is here to stay. Individuals are used up, but the institutionalized setting exerts pressures for their rapid replacement. "The particular," wrote Hegel, "is for the most part of too trifling a value as compared with the general: Individuals are sacrificed and abandoned." [30] Such is the cunning of reason, or, as the sociologist has it, the power of institutions. □

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[30] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Bohn Library, n.d.), p. 34.

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Robert Boyers

The Woman Question & the Death of the Family

It is not surprising that the woman question has come to seem urgent during the last few years. A period so given to activity in behalf of every liberation could be counted upon to leave no convention undisturbed.

Although such writers as Kate Millett and Susan Brownmiller have been less than illuminating, there has been occasion to think long and hard about a good many things—both because of the emergence of the women's liberation movement and because of such liberationists as R. D. Laing, Herbert Marcuse, and Norman Mailer. If we take seriously what the radical feminists have in mind, we ought to consider it in the context of a whole series of arguments that have split this culture in two or more parts. These arguments I should like to engage under the heading, "The Death of the Family," which I take from the title of a recent book by David Cooper.

Dr. Cooper, a British psychoanalyst and close associate of R. D. Laing, comes across in his book as a very compelling and troubling man, in the way that severely disturbed people may be both engaging and repulsive. While he seems to have located very nicely what has driven his patients out of their wretched minds, he is terribly confused about what can be done about their troubles.

What upsets one in reading Cooper's book, though, is that he proves wholly incapable of examining one of the basic assumptions upon which its premise rests: the notion that all men who would experience themselves authentically must necessarily first undergo what he describes as "divorce proceedings." Now it is dispiriting to see a gifted man fail to perform even the least demanding routines such as most of us handle every day. And when a psychiatrist informs us that handling these routines easily just about disqualifies us from the company of the authentic, that we shall be exalted only to the degree that we fail in conducting our lives smoothly, we become not only dispirited but perhaps even a little defensive. What is this man out to prove? Ought we to listen to him? Can any of this do us good?

Let us first try to see how his writing is symptomatic of something very general in our culture. I don't mean anything as simple as hairbrained prophesy or charismatic hysteria. For Cooper, the death of the family, taken in its very broadest sense, is a process that will enable the growth of an entirely joyous individual free to participate in and reject relations according to his own needs. Without the death of the family, he feels, we shall continue to produce human beings alienated from their true needs, their bodies, and the possibility of community. We shall continue to deny our children the discovery of their selfhood and we shall promote guilt in the coming generations for their failures to redeem the shabbiness of our lives.

What will the death of the family look like? The imagination runs amok with the sheer limitless possibilities. But here is an image that profoundly exercises Cooper:

> How do we learn to mind our own business —as did the Japanese Haiku poet Bashō?

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> In his journal, *The Narrow Road To The Deep North,* Bashō describes how, shortly after setting out, he saw on the other side of a river an abandoned child, small, desolate, and weeping. He could have gone back to the child and found some sort of home for it in a nearby village, but he chose to continue his elected, solitary voyage. Bashō's compassion was fully expressed in verse, but his voyage had to come first—he knew he could do nothing for the child until he knew what he had to do for himself. The hardest lesson of all is to know what one has to do for oneself.

Does this have all that much to do with the family and ultimately with the woman question? I think so. After all, Bashō's behavior is very much in keeping with what Cooper suggests of actual family situations:

> There seem to be very few mothers indeed who can keep their hands off their child long enough to allow the capacity to be alone to develop. There is always a need to try to arrest the wailing desperation of the others—for one's own sake, not for theirs . . . the infant may need, in *her* or *his* time, to experience frustration, desperation, and finally a full-scale experience of depression.

One must be sympathetic toward a fellow who is intent on finding out what he has to do for himself. In a culture that generates all sorts of spurious needs while thriving upon fantasied impressions of scarcity, to look to one's true needs amounts almost to a heroic enterprise. What is so distressing about Cooper, though, is that he finds it necessary to cultivate Bashō as some sort of symbolic personage who can show us the way. Cooper will not see Bashō as a man troubled in the extreme who, at a relatively advanced age, discovers that he must pursue an image of himself he has long sought to avoid. Nor will he see that the extremity of Bashō's way need hardly be approved as a model for all men. One suspects that for Cooper and others in the counter culture, only the refusal to address the wailing of the abandoned child would be sufficient validation of their personal sincerity and commitment to truth. To point out to Cooper the altogether abstract nature of Bashō's commitment as compared with the concrete dilemma of the weeping child would constitute a hideous appeal easy to reject as bourgeois sentimentality. No; I expect Cooper would be little moved by an outright appeal for compassion among human beings.

In fact, it is not compassion Cooper lacks, nor spirit, nor even intellect, nor loyalty. He lacks only balance, a most unfashionable property many in the counter culture would have us junk altogether. And what is this balance but a sense of the appropriate emphasis we owe to the various realities with which we daily contend? The hardest lesson may well be, as Cooper says, to know what one has to do for oneself, even if the notion does go against the grain of Western thought as it has come to us throughout these millennia. But why, we must ask in turn, can we not first address the wailing of the abandoned child? Is this child some sort of inferior reality the inspired individual cannot find the time to confront?

Worse yet, is it the sort of reality that can be so readily dismissed in its disturbing aspects as it is by Cooper: "The infant may need, in *her* or *his* time, to experience frustration, desperation, and finally a full-scale experience of depression." We may think of such speculations as naive, but we ought also to suggest to Mr. Cooper that infants frequently cry because they have cramps or are cold or hungry. Older children frequently cry because they have nightmares and need to be comforted. Commonplace? Vulgar? Too obvious to be said? I hardly think so, for in the counter culture, and more and more in the culture at large, these are largely forbidden observations. Most parents know about these realities, perhaps even try to address them where their own children are concerned; but the universe of high discourse must be left uncontaminated by such mundane concerns. It is better by far, it seems, to speak of an infant's experiencing frus-

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tration and desperation so that he may know how to live in a grown-up world in which, presumably, these are the major experiences he will need to confront. An infant's cramps don't do much for the mother's selfhood, I suppose, and so the counter culture shifts the ground to frustration, and informs us that in the worst of circumstances anyone may be taught to administer an enema, while the parent continues on his or her way to an ideal selfhood.

The death of the family, then, as it is developed by Cooper and others, involves first a deintensification of the parent-child relationship and a consequent breaking down of family-related structures of hierarchy and authority in other cultural institutions. Its promise is the reduction in strength and scope of all those internalized controls the family has made possible through a variety of love-oriented techniques. These have been described most persuasively by Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man* and by Philip Slater in *The Pursuit of Loneliness*.

Slater, in a critique of the child-rearing practices associated with Dr. Spock, asserts that such intense maternal nurturance as Spock recommends inevitably produces an abundance of such guilt in the child that it may require a lifetime to be overcome. The words frequently remind the reader of Cooper, but Slater's utterances have a quiet modesty that one appreciates. The argument ranges from the intimately familial to the political, with politics here conceived on a global scale. For our purposes, though, the level of familial intimacy is more crucial than any other, for it is a level at which we can individually engage ourselves, and it is a level upon which all others surely depend. In Slater's view, this is what has happened:

> The parents under the old method [before the time of Dr. Spock's baby book] felt they had done their job well if the child was obedient, even if he turned out dull, unimaginative, surly, sadistic, and sexually incapacitated. Spockian parents feel that it is their responsibility to make their child into the most all-around perfect adult possible, which means paying a great deal of attention to his inner states and latent characteristics. The consequence of this is what is superficially defined as greater "permissiveness," but from an internal perspective is actually more totalitarian—the child no longer has a private sphere, but has his entire being involved with parental aspirations. What the child is *not* permitted to do is to take his own personality for granted.

At the same time, in trying to explain the widespread discontent of young people asked to support the ongoing political and cultural system, Slater concedes that

> . . . Spock-oriented parents, absorbed with the goal of molding the child's total character, were much less inclined to sacrifice the child to the etiquette concerns of strangers. The artist working on his masterpiece does not let guests use it to wipe their feet on. As a result, their children have grown up to feel that human needs have some validity of their own, and that social occasions are less sacred than they appeared to earlier generations.

Where does this leave us? It leaves us with what Slater sees as a generation of ambitious, grasping, guilty, moralistic adolescents and young adults who are, at the same time, capable of conceiving that human needs have a real legitimacy that no structure can deny. The result is a great deal of frustration in which young people clamor for the resurrection of human values they cannot themselves begin to understand. They are prevented by guilt and by the simple urge to get along in a culture bent on manufacturing artificial needs just beyond the reach even of its most grasping constituents. According to Slater, we are left with a terrible conflict among the generations, in which the children move to actualize, at least in terms of symbolic gesture, the values they have been taught by their parents, and in which the parents insist upon being loved and respected for what they are, though their everyday behavior vio-

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lates whatever values they have tried to communicate to their children. In Slater's terms,

> The earlier group of parents wanted their children to become rich and respectable and still remain somehow part of the working-class milieu. The later group want their children to be more cultured, less money-grubbing, more spontaneous and creative, yet still somehow willing to remain on the same treadmill with the parents.

What confuses us about this is that a generation into whom the internal controls have been so soundly built should be so rebellious, so dissatisfied; that this generation's discontent has to do not only with the desire for more and better goods, such as a scarcity economics must always promise, but with the fact that these promises should be made and these desires be generated among us. What so many of that generation are raging about is the technological and political manipulation, and also about their own appalling susceptibility to this manipulation. Why, we are compelled to ask, should these Spockian children find it so easy to rebel, and why are they turned off by the very things they know they can obtain and achieve if only they press on? What I am suggesting is that if people like Marcuse and Slater are right in saying that families tend to prepare children for replication of the basic authoritarian and alienating structure in a variety of other institutions, then the children should be more malleable than they seem to be in so many instances.

If American culture today finds itself at the breaking point, as the subtitle of Slater's book contends, can the situation be attributed to a totalitarian control, exerted on emergent generations, a control facilitated by Spockian maternal nurturance? One would expect just the opposite of our present situation: in place of a tendency to drop out of things, we'd anticipate a gravitation to the sources of power and wealth; in place of a massive equalization of priorities in which all options are viewed as equally desirable, possible, and healthy, we'd anticipate a rigorous hierarchization in which value would be attached only to those things that validated an individual's energy, creativity, intellectual breadth, and so on. Clearly, something is wrong with the analysis the counter culture has provided.

Now I'm not certain I know precisely what it is that's out of place in the analysis —surely, even if a fellow like David Cooper is careless of detail, of simple human reality, that is not the sort of thing one can say of a Slater. He is a careful observer of American mores, and few of our customary deceptions evade his notice. Where he is least persuasive, though, is in his predictions of the future—sociology and prophesy do not, perhaps, get along very well. The predictions amount to little more than a catalogue of wishes, with little definition of the means by which they might be actualized. Though he says the drift of a decent future will inevitably have to be communal in nature, Slater sees young people as peculiarly unsuited to realizing such a future:

> Any community worthy of the name [one in which the relationships between people are regulated by people, instead of by machines] would seem "totalitarian" to today's youth, not in the sense of having an authoritarian leadership structure, but in the sense of permitting group intrusion into what is for most Americans the private sphere. This will be the most difficult problem new-culture adherents will face, for we are long accustomed to an illusory freedom based on subtle compulsion by technology and bureaucratic mechanisms. But there is no way for large numbers of people to coexist without governing and being governed by each other, unless they establish machines to do it; at which point they risk losing sight and understanding of the interconnectedness itself—a process well advanced in our culture today.

Slater is calling into question the entire ethic described by the phrase "do your own thing," a counter-culture expression that ex-

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tends native American individualism without in any way considering what in fact entails doing one's own thing. In other words, while the counter culture has subverted all sorts of things in American life, it has subscribed to a traditional value Americans have always pointed to with pride. Never mind that individualism hasn't been a vitally operant principle for middle-class Americans in the last 50 years.

What the young have been doing, as they've so often reminded us, is recalling their elders and their alienated peers to a vital tradition badly in need of renovation. What a disappointment it must be, then, for so many people in the counter culture to be told, by a friend like Slater no less, that to do your own thing is too often to do it at someone else's expense, and frequently at the expense of one's entire culture. The terms of the argument are not new in this country, but the implications are bound to make a great many people feel uneasy. "You mean doing your own thing is bad, even if it doesn't involve burning draft-card files or dropping acid or lying down in front of troop trains?" Slater's answer is, essentially, Yes, it's a bad thing because looking around at ourselves and our friends, we don't like what we see. All these twisted aspiring businessmen and these angry desperate foulmouthed young people hardly give us cause to believe we have been heading in a fruitful direction.

Up to this point I find what he says insightful and persuasive. Where we part company is the point at which he argues for the development of communal modes of relation to replace the tightly knit nuclear family. I also do not understand the uncritical adoption of Marcuse's notion of a triumphant pleasure principle wholly divorced from instrumental values, the notion that play indulged in and for itself can become a dominant mode of behavior in a future communal society, or that such a circumstance is devoutly to be wished. Surely communal structures, as Slater well knows, will require both a good deal of planning and meticulous governance, and I don't see how this will be possible in a culture largely divorced from instrumental values and committed to play as an end in itself. Intimate communities founded along such lines will rapidly break down, I fear, or they will tend to develop hierarchies in which numbers of people will be selected to run the operation, to organize, plan, and support its activities while a great many others run about playing games and enjoying a perpetual childhood. It sounds a good deal like the sort of situation hippies may look toward—they will be perpetual flower children, while a variety of straights clean the streets, drive buses, sign peace treaties, and develop cures for cancer. I don't imagine that this could appeal to Philip Slater, or to Herbert Marcuse, but we need to understand how a new culture can promise to deliver us of so many evils without giving rise to others at least as vicious.

What I have said thus far may give the impression that I have something against play, against the free movement of the instincts. As a matter of fact, though I like to play as much as a great many people I know, I am not altogether sanguine about the prospects for a culture that has become so terribly self-conscious about its spontaneity and play habits as ours has. Clearly, these concerns have much to do with the rigid insistence upon doing one's thing that Slater so derides, and they are all complexly involved in the woman question as well. For what virtually all contemporary radical movements in this country have in common is a refusal to assign themselves specific goals that have anything to do with the enduring and communal needs of participants. That is why revolution and theater have grown so close in the last few years, why performers like Abbie Hoffman have taken so much of our collective attention, why gesture and act are almost indistinguishable for many of us. Is the women's movement essentially theatri-

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cal in nature? Not in its most serious manifestations, but in part certainly. When Susan Brownmiller, for instance, tells us that a major theme of the women's movement must be its resistance to rape, that men in American society have ceaselessly and shamelessly raped its women, we have the sense that she is after applause rather than a more substantial response.

The women who will interest me when they speak of their condition will address a situation we *share,* which has rather little to do with restrictions on freedom. They will speak, and I will respond, with respect to what we have made of our freedom, how we have damaged each other and incapacitated one another for a truly comprehensive experience. Contrary to those who lament our inability to play, I worry that we play all too consistently without getting much from our play, that we lead fundamentally experimental lives without holding clearly in our minds what we might hope to learn. While we are far from realizing a culture of flower children, we have liberated ourselves to a sort of magnificent randomness according to which each person goes his own way freely screwing every object in sight without ever experiencing the temptation to stop and reflect pleasurably upon his experience. Americans live collectively under the aegis of Fitzgerald's green light; as a culture we have trained ourselves to look always for the go sign that will encourage the continuance of activity no matter how random; in Philip Rieff's terms, "the important thing is to keep going."

What women have been asking for of late is a comparable freedom with men to be on the move, to vary life patterns and switch allegiances in accordance with the dictates of an independent spirit. They have told us that, given their way, they will set about to discover modes of being-on-the-move that will satisfy them and that will put to rout all male pretensions to superior mobility, creativity, and adventurousness. Not only will they withdraw from men who deny them their rights, but they will move perpetually to disencumber themselves from anyone or anything that would type them as women and place obstacles in the path of their selfhood. Where once there was the woman as object there will come to be the woman as free-floating self, absorbed in the creation of a project to replace the spurious life goals previously designed for her by men. The content of her project will matter very little next to the fact that it will be her own and that the men will never again dare to expect of her anything she has not already given them to understand they may legitimately expect. The death of the family will be complete, so that no roles may be taught or prepared for, no specific values imparted.

Women will feel free to respond or not to their wailing children, and will satisfy themselves easily that to look to their own immediate wishes will work to the advantage of all concerned. No more will a child witness his mother turning from her own needs, even momentarily, to cater to his, as though being his mother could somehow have an importance transcending her selfhood. Like the trained scientist, the woman will find it easier and easier to entertain a variety of perspectives upon herself and upon others, even her children if she should have any, and her one overriding desire in life will be to attain clarity about herself and her needs. Proper conduct will be altogether problematic, and will depend upon the disposition of the woman at a given moment in time. Like men in our culture, she will refuse to think of any mode of behavior as other than immediately self-serving.

What I see in the most visible expressions of the woman's movement in this country is a predictable extension of America's rampant individualism informed and driven by the psychological ideals of a therapeutic culture, to adopt for a moment the language of Philip Rieff. Individual health will consist of the individual's conviction that he knows about and can act in accordance with his true wishes, while the health of the culture will

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reside in its continuing capacity to promote this conviction in its citizens.

If it has not become sufficiently obvious by now, I should say that I do not like what has happened to us, what we have brought upon ourselves, and that to the degree that the women have embraced a therapeutic ethic, or nonethic, I despair. Ought we to hope for better? Probably not, though we have hoped unreasonably before, and will again, no doubt. For what will we hope?

If we are dissatisfied with merely doing our own thing, each man and woman his or her own creator, the culture unambivalent only about our right to pursue self-generated goals with the very least interference possible, can we then turn suddenly to some more structured situation as a viable goal? Can human beings who have become almost as free as gods, free to participate in or to reject relation, free to behave responsibly or not according to need or desire rather than conscience, can such men and women seek to be controlled? Can they feel compelled once more, as religious men and women were compelled, by an authority they accepted because they knew it was right that they do so? It may appear at first either idiotic or perverse to speak hopefully of authority when we have been told so strenuously that our culture controls us in ways thorough beyond the wildest imaginings of our ancestors.

Clearly, I think it neither idiotic nor perverse, in part at least because I deny we are as deeply controlled as Marcuse, Slater, and others contend. Moreover, to the extent that we are controlled, the control is insidious and terrible precisely because we are controlled in the name and in behalf of nothing. What Slater describes as love-oriented techniques for controlling Spockian children Marcuse describes as the promise of a wide distribution of unending plentiude to control entire populations. But in neither case does the individual feel compelled, on behalf of any value, to make his life choices as if his very soul were at stake. The Spockian parent brings up the child to fulfill *himself*, to discover his "natural" potential and to be true only to it, whatever that may entail.

Atomic culture promises everything, so that its citizens are incapacitated to select any one thing as if ultimately it mattered very much. Alternatives become merely matters of perspective, in this view, so that the wise man learns quickly that between one choice and another, either will do, depending on his mood at a given moment. The women's liberation movement, as a movement, has not had nearly enough to say about this state of affairs, I suppose largely because it has perceived the situation in very different terms. In fact, the movement's most outspoken advocates have simply accepted what has been developing in American culture for some time, and merely demanded a larger share of the action for women in general.

Nonetheless, we owe a lot to the radical feminists, for they have stirred us to consider what they say and to find suitable grounds on which to refute them, when refutation is called for. I take seriously the view of John Stuart Mill that arguments with which we disagree are useful for sharpening our own sense of what it is we believe. What as a culture we badly need, though, is some clear conception of an all-important truth to which we may feel compelled. What we want is to respond not so much to the specific distortions of fact in Kate Millett's argument, but with what we know is good and compelling in human experience and is not sufficiently cherished in the perspective of radical feminists.

The women's movement has forced many of us not only to rethink our lives as men and women, especially the relations between the sexes, but also to examine the nature and value of the family. And what I shall here support and defend is precisely the family, not in all of its versions certainly, but as a necessary and still vital institution. That this entails in some basic way a defense of motherhood as well, I recognize, but the fact in no way strikes me as rendering the argu-

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ment untenable. Because we have tended more and more to measure our strength by the numbers of beliefs we have abjured, we find it difficult at best to hold the line where the family is concerned; but hold we must.

If the family is not quite a necessary adjurant of man's biological nature, as the psychiatrist Theodore Lidz feels it may well be, it is at least something without which, if we do survive as a culture at all, we shall do even more poorly than we have to this point in time. I say this not merely on the basis of the many family studies I have read and pondered, but on the basis of my experience as a member of families, first as a child, more recently as a husband and father—and it is with nothing approaching retrospective horror that I look to my participation in these families. While the one I grew up in and the one my young son knows are different sorts of families, they have both developed in such a way that all participant members would know the intensities of pain and of joy, and the routines that can afford to accommodate relatively little of either.

The women's movement, then, has retrospectively returned us to the families in which we grew up, a journey many of us have been encouraged seriously to undertake in the course of intensive analysis and with the guidance of an experienced psychiatrist. And from this journey we have gone on to look at our current family situations, not to draw the easy comparisons, but to better understand the way we lead our intimate lives.

In all this the women have taken the major role, even those who have not identified themselves with the radical feminists, and for this, too, I am grateful. For the urgency of their involvement is not a thing most men could have approximated—preoccupied with our careers as we have been; even those of us with rather dreadful or boring marriages and spiteful, grasping children were not about to unsettle things by asking fundamental questions and rethinking our roles as fathers and husbands. For "divorce proceedings" many men have been ready, to be sure, but they have not usually been of the sort that might promise better eventualities in some distant future. All too frequently the divorces have been pressed on idiotic grounds and have been succeeded by romantic and delusional liaisons and finally by newer and sourly degenerating marriages. Or, at best, with rare exceptions, men have gone on to find in their new relationships more compliant and motherly wives than they could find the first time around, women badly burned in early marital wars, perhaps, and therefore more willing to settle for simple stability and to occupy the protective, largely symbolic role of mature nurturant both to children and husband.

It is to this woman, perhaps more than to any other, that the women's lib people ought to speak—but the radical feminists will continue, I expect, to frighten and disappoint her. And it is to this rather overly domesticated, unhappy, yet still proud and alert woman that we may address our thoughts, whether the woman be in her first, second, even third marriage. For this is the middle-class woman of our time, the woman who has not bought modernity as if it were the most precious item in a badly diminished inventory of valuables. And what we will say to her is not that life is . . . life, the conventional woman's role hard but . . . her role willy-nilly and come what may.

What we men ought to say, as the women themselves should have been urging us to do these several years, is more like: life is involved, at least for most human beings, in generation, generation implies nurturance and the real pleasure that children give and our commitment to them gives us. This is a responsibility and a pleasure that we should not want to give up, not to make a thing of mere random possibility like the pleasure of making a great deal of money, or the responsibility of keeping accurate records or quoting one's scholarly sources carefully. These are pleasures and responsibilities not commensurate, and we must not let polemic deal with them as if they were.

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Beyond this, we want to concede that to be committed to our children and to the process of nurturance as a living and immediate enterprise may well turn out to be a hazardous business. On the one hand, there is the prospect described by the Brahmanic adage, which reads: "Each time you create a new tie, you drive another pain, like a nail, into your heart." True or not, it is something not readily to be dismissed, and as we look about us at the great rush to reduce these intimate ties to mere options, we realize how persuasive the adage has been, how completely it has been taken to heart by a generation of therapeutics hell-bent on a pleasure that is to be the exclusive function of libertarian play.

Now, of course, we may make a number of smaller observations, decidedly less dramatic, less categorical, such as that children do not develop a sufficient sense of what they can do when everything is done for them for too long a time, or that mothers who become too exclusively involved in the nurturance of their children frequently resent them when they grow independent and generally capable. To these more or less familiar points I should add others, to the effect that fathers who cultivate distance and dignity at the expense of paternal warmth rarely turn out to be acceptable figures for their children, who conceive ultimate authority as kept from them by a series of dexterous mystifications. Too subtle? Perhaps this next point may be nearer the mark: fathers accustomed to relating to their children through the mediation of a comforting and more regularly available mother will tend to sacrifice too much of their own emotional expressiveness to the mother and further reenforce the children's impression that authority is not only distant but also not obliged to deal intimately with the tedious details of ordinary living.

We could go on and on with this, and I agree that such speculative probes seem as good a way as any in which to apprehend human reality in all its uncertainty. Still, there must be a limit to speculation, as to generalizing observations, and we should keep in mind Keats's remark that "the truth is, there is something real in the world." We want to remember, too, that what is real is subject to change, but that change is something we will best consider in the context of enduring values to which we may feel committed, and which seem still worthy of honor. The family and the special intimacies it enables seem to me an ineradicable value, despite what we have lately been told about the awful things it does. I have studied the literature on schizophrenogenic families, and have discussed them at length with therapists. I consider it a fact that the great majority of us have been incapacitated for a truly wide experience—Marcuse's notion of one-dimensionality seems to me in its essence irrefutable, though the prospects for change I interpret as less distant than he will concede. And still I argue that the family is not a unit that inevitably nurtures mad children and creates a bind in which all members lose track of who they are and what they feel. Just as sure as it is possible to be a grown-up, to look one's parent in the face and tell him or her what one likes and does not like, just so is it possible for families to provide a model and training ground, a central experience of relation and intimacy that may well enrich all other relations.

What, then, have we to attend to in the women's movement? To the voices that tell us that the women and the men must reconceive their roles as not distinct but indivisible except to the extent that normal *human* circumstances and temperaments prevent perfect sharing. There are those who say that this is a vicious and stupid idea, that specifically sexual relations, for instance, will be forever fouled up if we forget that sex has to do with power, that a man will have an impossible time "getting it up" for a perfect equal with whom he has worked out arrangements for sharing all aspects of nurturance and domestic detail. But is it wishful thinking to assert that our sexual lives need not

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be severely diminished by reconceiving masculine and feminine roles as more or less indivisible insofar as such things as child-rearing and professional experience are concerned? We shall have to see, as such a reconception becomes a reality for greater numbers of people.

It will be easy to parody the kinds of arrangements toward which couples inexperienced in real sharing will grope their respective ways. Charges of mechanicism and abstraction will be on the tips of the tongues both of participants and bemused spectators. Clearly, some of us will be better equipped than others to realize the new potential—we may feel we have less at stake in maintaining the old order than in insisting that our families try something new. Obviously, male college professors with relatively light working schedules will be better able than many, many others to adapt to a situation that calls for their spending daylight hours in the home with their growing children. Most men will not find it possible immediately to alter their work schedule, which has them returning to their homes during the week at a time when most children are about to go to bed. Many will never break the pattern, even with computer revolutions and other technological advances. Some will be unable to see themselves even as part-time homemakers, and will spend much time decrying the rampant proliferation of women who would castrate men. We may hope, though, that even such men will make subtle accommodations, if only for the sake of their children, who must not learn still again that what is appropriately a woman's work can be handled by men only at the expense of their manhood, and that careers in the great world are exclusively the domain of men and exceptional women.

What I urge, then, is only in part what Slater describes as the deintensification of the mother-child relationship. I have in mind a corresponding reintensification of the father-child relationship, and the development of a more comprehensive mutuality in the nuclear family. Also, I propose a series of adjustments in the usual conception of career, so that achievement orientation comes to be decidedly less single-minded than it has been. According to such a perspective, a career will be something one pursues in conjunction with what is at least equally one's real work: the nurturance of family and the perpetuation of enduring intimacies that grow and change throughout the course of a lifetime. For things of this nature to happen, we shall need more than will, though will cannot be discounted, and we shall have to take care that we do not bring to pass what our culture has already invited all too feverishly. In reinterpreting and extending mutuality as a principle upon which the nuclear family can be rebuilt we do not want to encourage the notion that human experience can be reduced to domestic detail, or professional exertions to the status of part-time entertainment. What a disaster if we should find ourselves in Kierkegaard's evocation of his own time: "The *taedium vitae* so constant in antiquity was due to the fact that the outstanding individual was what others *could not be;* the inspiration of modern times will be that any man who finds himself, religiously speaking, has only achieved what *everyone can achieve.*"

Yet, what everyone can achieve ought not to be frivolously dismissed in the interests of some illusory greatness or exalted creativity that will ever be the domain of a few. Genius makes its way inevitably toward what it must do for itself, even as the poet Bashō in David Cooper's paradigm could leave the wailing child in its misery. Just as it is not always possible for great poets to be moral geniuses, so it is hideous to suggest that most of us betray what we can do well so as to enjoy some perfect freedom most of us can neither appreciate nor do much with. The family at its best addresses what is best in most men and women. If we can learn once again its compelling urgency and the modest exaltations it promises, we shall do much better as a culture. □

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Jeremy Larner

To Speak of Black Violence

"I'll be glad when you're dead, you rascal you!"
—*Louis Armstrong* to the King of England

The Voice of Malcolm

When the time came, Malcolm X was going to "unveil" his program—that specific cause-and-effect linking of actions to goals which would bring about equality for black people in the United States. Since his was the most dramatic rejection of the civil rights movement, it was only natural to ask Malcolm for his alternative: how, exactly, could violence create the social and economic parity that nonviolence had failed to bring?

Malcolm's answers were strategically ambiguous.[1] He argued most of his career for separation—for a parcel of land either here or in Africa—then changed his mind a few months before his death. At that time he hoped the new governments of Africa—ruled by the "strong men" he admired—would bring the American issue before the United Nations. Now and again Malcolm called for an "American Mau Mau." But at the same time he stressed voter registration—though he rejected the concept of building power within either major party. "The ballot or the bullet," he said; but it was unclear how either was to be used. And since Malcolm's assassination on February 21, 1965, no one else has succeeded in outlining a systematic use of violence as the means to black equality in this country, unless one counts the parade of ringmasters for a revolution which perpetually fails to materialize.

But it is not for his politics that Malcolm has been mythicized and deified among young black people, "our manhood, our own shining black prince," as Ossie Davis called him in his eulogy. The legend of Malcolm is essentially religious and derives from his incarnation and reincarnation in a variety of strong, "bad" roles which culminate in a supreme ability to stand eyeball to eyeball with "the devils." The figure of Malcolm is the symbol par excellence of the new black man, whose spiritual credo is "take no shit." Malcolm "told" it, and he made it righteous:

> Not a single white person in America would sit idly by and let someone do to him what we black men have been letting others do to us. The white person would not remain passive, peaceful and non-violent. The day the black man in this country shows others that we are just as human as they in reaction to injustice, that we are just as willing to die to protect our lives and property . . . only then will our people be recognized as human beings. . . . The government has not protected us. It is time to do whatever is necessary by any means necessary to protect ourselves.[2]

That is Malcolm X at his most lucid and compelling. If a black man is fired upon, why in the world should he not fire back? Even the saying of it denotes a step in the direction of freedom. Or call it manhood. And yet . . . and yet, there was a time when it

[1] Cf. my report, "McComb vs. Harlem," DISSENT, Spring 1965.

[2] Harvard Law School, December 16, 1964.

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could not be said, much less acted upon. The fact that it can now be maintained—as part of a daily, ongoing attitude toward the world—is a sign of change and progress, political work done and social gain achieved. There could be no Malcolm X without a Martin Luther King.

The fact is that nonviolent pressure tactics have produced a tremendous amount of integration in American life since 1945. In that period, every public aspect of life has become integrated: and if you don't think that's significant, imagine how our society would feel if we returned to segregated armed forces, sports and entertainment, to say nothing of transportation and other public facilities. What remains is the urban ghetto, the physical separation of the bulk of the black population, which as long as it continues will perpetuate economic inferiority. But integration, and the possibility of integration, remains the great moving force in race relations since the end of World War II. Integration has significantly changed the outlook of black people, created new conditions, new anxieties and new forms of expression, one of which is the open call for violence.

The Idea of Integration

TRADITIONALLY, the black community in America has been a frontier area, where law and law enforcement were instruments of the white ruling class, used almost exclusively to maintain black caste inferiority. The law shielded whites from blacks but not blacks from whites. The sorriest aspect of black existence in America was that the black man could not protect his woman, his children, or his home. This is the first fact that must be confronted by those who would deal with the weakness of the black family, and it is the fact which gave symbolic impact to the Black Panthers' attempts to patrol the Oakland cops.

The ghetto was also a lawless area when it came to relations between blacks and blacks. Conflicts between individuals were settled by personal, physical force, or by verbal show of force. In this kind of situation it paid off to have a reputation as a "bad nigger"—a man who will without hesitation retaliate upon anyone who gets in his way. Ordinarily such a man would be restrained by legal force and moral disapproval. Certainly to love him took an amount of masochism and self-hate, qualities which could hardly be lacking under the circumstances. If not love there was bound to be an admiration for the "bad nigger," who, as his title implies, was everything the white man didn't want him to be—and who, when he fired back on whites, as he sometimes did, was risking his life for the sake of his personal style.

In a community where law is absent or minimal, where life itself cannot be guaranteed, the *style* of life takes on a supreme importance. Style signifies self-esteem, not through substance, career, or position, but through personal power in relation to the give and take of the immediate scene.

When it came to the dynamics of life on the frontier, the style required was a readiness for display, for passion, for toughness and even brutality. But in contact with whites, the only style consistent with survival was the style of accommodation—even if accommodation masked anger, theft and sabotage. For the white man was in a position to exploit the black man—and woman—for his own economic, social and sexual gain. Black people were crippled and inferior in their relations with whites—and compensation could be found only in pursuit of their "real" lives within the black community, where their prestige could hardly depend on their positions in the world at large.

But now the signals have been changed. The big city is right at hand, with all the sweets of white power, and the most respected blacks are those who go and get them some. The white world is open as never before, and nonexploitative contacts are not only available, they are—for black males, at least—nearly unavoidable. The contact

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comes increasingly in schools, and through community centers and youth programs. There is contact in the army, and likely to be more contact on the job. If a young black person becomes part of the "street culture" around urban universities and some high schools, there will be chances for social and sexual contact as well. Perhaps most significantly, the efforts of integrationist recruiting and preparation programs have ensured a dramatic increase in black college enrollment—up from 287,000 in 1960 to 680,000 in 1971, including a proportionately higher number of students from the lowest social levels.[3]

So integration on the personal level is a real possibility. The trouble is that in a larger social sense, Americans seem to reject integration: they move away from Negroes, they are not willing to undertake the basic economic programs that would be necessary to eliminate the ghetto. So that young blacks emerging into white society are still coming from the frontier: they are simultaneously taking it along with them and leaving it behind. For them the price of admission to the world of white expertise and power is still something that feels like accommodation: that is, they must approach as inferior beings who are starting from a disadvantaged position. The crux of every integrated job or training or educational opportunity is that the young black person is being given a chance to catch up. Often enough, he knows full well that he has been admitted through a special lowering of the usual standards.

Giving opportunities to catch up is not in itself unrealistic; but the situation can be unbearable for the individual, who in applying for improvement to the white world must in some sense repudiate what he is and where he comes from. When he does, the reward for his renunciation is not full equality—merely the right to continue to struggle at a disadvantage.

Integration then is a terrible threat to the well-being and self-esteem of young black people, and the more successful they are in the larger world the more of a threat it may be. Logically, their fulfillment as educated, skilled people should be part of a process that will wipe out the ghetto; but in fact the ghetto remains, it is worse off than ever, plagued triply by heroin, while American society is committed to do nothing more than skim some talent off the top and maintain the rest as is. If the ghetto must remain, and the masses of black people must remain within it, the individual who leaves it behind might well feel like a traitor.

To sum up: young blacks begin from an inferior position, they are aware of an ultimate rejection, and can look forward at best to an impasse. Under such conditions mere opportunity is maddening.

Young black people are torn in two by America. On page one of the *New York Times* of April 4, 1972, there is a story about increasing racial conflict on college campuses: separatism, culture clashes, rowdiness, sometimes theft and assault. This partly explains why white students are no longer interested in being tongue-whipped by revolutionary lecturers. The young blacks, for their part, do not want to be "friends" with the whites; they make contact through forms of hostility. But in another story that same day, same paper, buried on page 58, we learn that a survey has been taken of 54,000 college-bound black students: and two-thirds of them believe that integration is "not only good but necessary."

Clearly something happens to these kids when they begin to live in the integrated situation. Accommodation to the routine of student life is required, but departures in verbal style or personal attitude no longer imperil one's life. Personal aggression is acceptable: at best, from the aggressor's point of view, he will meet with sympathy; at worst, it can be gotten away with. And as

[3] *New York Times,* April 4, 1972. The 1971 figure for white college enrollment is 8,087,000. "About 56 per cent of the black college students attend predominantly white institutions where very few blacks attended a decade before."

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long as the national situation contains the built-in assumption of inferiority, expressions of vengeance and violence are inevitable.

The Social Uses of Hostility

WITH WHAT ATTITUDES do young or "new" blacks engage the equivocal welcome of the white world? The following list is admittedly incomplete; its focus is on attitudes involving forms of aggression.

a) *Super Materialism.* The determination to get for oneself everything that can be gotten. Personal goods belonging to white people viewed as spoils of exploitation. Old-fashioned conspicuous consumption, involving both standard American TV commodities and that showier line of merchandise for black people only.

b) *A Hermetic Ideology of Blackness.* Black is not only beautiful, it can't be judged by standards other than its own. Exaggeration of the glory of African civilization (kings and riches), and the cultural and political cohesiveness of "the black community."

c) *Tough Talking.* The desire for respect, the need for compensatory privileges expressed in the language of demand and threat. Possible embarrassments of direct competition or cooperation avoided through styles of aloofness or "pride."

d) *Vigilant Assertion of Manhood.* A threat projected into every conceivable situation, as if to make certain that none will be overlooked. The best defense is a good offense, or vice versa. The concealed point is a sensation of full-time vulnerability.

e) *Bringing the Frontier to Whitey.* Whitey can't protect his family either. Why should he alone be safe on the street or in his apartment? Whitey can be hit, his son can be hit, his daughter can be had. With no apologies. This is the latest bill for racism in America, Malcolm's "chickens coming home to roost," the newest fact of life between the races. It is intensified by the replacement of the knife with the hand gun among delinquents and lower-class gangs of both races.

f) *The Will to Unity.* The assertion that all black aggression is part of the good and against the bad. The identification, for example, for the sake of which black college students may band together to bully whites to release a black intruder whom they have caught in a dormitory in the act of theft or assault.

IN SOME RESPECTS this adaptation of hostility is class-bound and parallels the attitudes of ethnic immigrant groups as they prepared for entry into American society. Other groups—e.g., the Irish, the Jews, the Italians—have been regarded as innately uncouth, violent, and animalistic. There were members of all these groups who chose outright gangsterism as an avenue to the American dream. From a very long view, the current adaptation could be viewed as transitional: but it is "blacker" from the bitterness of a longer wait, an incomparably more hurtful wound, and a deeper doubt that the goal will ever be in reach.

For all the tension of contemporary American life, black violence against whites is by and large still sporadic rather than programmatic, in contrast to the history of white violence against blacks. It takes the form of eruptions in the everyday tension of continued and expanding black/white interrelations. Given the threat of partial integration and the insult of qualified equality, black attitudes of hostility and separatism are a means of differentiation without which engagement would apparently be impossible. Such attitudes must be respected, but they cannot be taken at face value, for it is *engagement* which is still the great problem and desire. The black man finds he cannot so simply engage on current terms. If, he says, we are not equal in every respect right from the beginning, we will damn well be *more* than equal.

Still: to have to be more than equal is crippling, for every assertion of supremacy

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has as its underside an unspoken confession of inferiority.

The Revolutionary Religion

THE WATTS RIOTS in August of 1965 were supposed to have begun it: the rise of a self-conscious black proletariat which would transform America by revolutionary violence. After the riots of 1967, the white writer Andrew Kopkind—to cite one of many who wrote as if he were sending a message from inside the black consciousness—announced to the readership of *The New York Review of Books* (August 24, 1967) that "there was more method in the uprisings than the press and the public could see . . . an authenticity beyond chaotic mob actions . . . tough black street leaders have emerged . . . mass action has convulsed the society. . . . Poor blacks have stolen the center stage from the liberal elites, which is to say that the old order has been shattered." Polarization was supposed to be in store, with "the establishment" swinging "wide to the right," liberal "buffers . . . obliterated." There would then ensue the confrontation the new radicals of the 1960s longed for, wherein American liberals would have to choose between violent repression and violent liberation.

Because America was "capitalist" it was "fascist," ran the new line of the new times, and therefore only violence could end racism. The analysis itself was posed as a moral test: if the only answer is full-out revolution, only the corrupt and the complicitous will refrain. Verbal assent then gives elite satisfaction.

When Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968, Eldridge Cleaver wrote a "Requiem for Nonviolence." "The war has begun," he said.

> The violent phase of the black liberation struggle is here, and it will spread. From that shot, from that blood, America will be painted red. Dead bodies will litter the streets and the scenes will be reminiscent of the disgusting, terrifying nightmarish news reports coming out of Algeria during the final breakdown of the French colonial regime.[4]

I wonder if it's necessary at this point to refute the colonial analogy: to remark that the U.S. government, for instance, is not a foreign imposition but for better or worse does represent a majority of the people living here, that avenues of politics by means other than violence are open. The analogy draws its strength from the long-term isolation and exploitation of black people. That oppression has engendered what seems to be the same kind of rage—though as I've tried to establish, the rage in this country has been intensified by a partial *lifting* of oppression. Is violence, as Cleaver and others argue via Fanon, the only necessary and inevitable therapy? Whether it's therapeutic or not, we are having some violence, and we are going to have more, in various forms, traceable to the fury of men who now have a chance to avenge the long history of emasculation.

It seems clear, however, that the revolution is not in the process of arriving—any more than those other magic charms of the 1960s, "black capitalism," and "community control." Even with Richard Nixon's indifference to any basic redistribution of wealth, even with unemployment maintained at a high level and the unaltered decay of urban ghettos, organized violent action has not caught on—and the riots, which on a practical level achieved only the deaths of black people and the further isolation and impoverishment of the ghetto, turn out to have been spontaneous and temporary.

Yes, there have been cops ambushed here and there, there have been guns bought and stored, proclamations, threats, speeches, classes, publications and sun-glassed bodyguards, but no sustained, organized revolutionary action, perhaps even less than among white children of the middle classes. Even the known assassins of Medgar Evers, Em-

[4] "The Death of Martin Luther King: Requiem for Nonviolence," written April 6, 1968; published later in *Ramparts* and in *Eldridge Cleaver: Post-Prison Writings and Speeches*, edited by Robert Scheer (New York: Random House, 1969).

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mett Till, Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney, the four little girls in Birmingham, etc.—whose deaths Malcolm logically called for—walk around the South free from retribution. It is a teacher in a ghetto school, a small shop owner, a cabdriver, or a co-ed who is more likely to feel the hand of ideologically certified black violence.

It turns out that however many young ones "speak the language," however many lash out at times in one way or another, very few black people are ready "to take up the gun." We will never know, in fact, how many of the key figures in the underground groups that did exist were agents in pay of the government, or how much "action" was carried out at their insistence. We do know that in some cases, such as the well-publicized plot to blow up the Statue of Liberty, the agent was the chief pusher for the plan which he hoped to exploit at the end by overturning.

Rhetorically, the ante is up, and will stay up. But in actuality the most sustained and serious political efforts among black people are now going into, of all things, voter registration and electoral politics. The number of black elected officials in this country increases almost geometrically from year to year. It has sunk in that if whites are going to run from the cities, then blacks might just run them. A comparison of the 1968 and 1972 Democratic conventions make it clear that black people have made significant gains within the Democratic party; and they are bound to make more. Nowadays, when black political conferences are held, it doesn't matter whether they're sponsored by "nationalists" who once screamed that democracy is a racist plot or by congressmen who've been in the marketplace wheeling and dealing: the outcome is an agenda of demands for legislative action, some of them outrageous, most of them in threatening rhetoric, but beneath the posturing, what it amounts to is a shopping list. Regardless of how they talk, black leaders these days are practical and meliorative, lobbying for cash for projects and programs, looking to push for more power, to widen that wedge in unions, media, police, and other basic institutions. Despite a few separatist planks—local control of schools, for example—the basic thrust is participatory if not integrationist. The ghetto is conceived of as a power base with its own separate needs, but there is a recognition that it is nothing without institutional connections to the larger society, and the effort is to widen those connections rather than cut them off.

Even Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense and no longer Supreme Commander but Servant of The People, has admitted that the Black Panthers "defected from the black community," to become a "revolutionary cult." The dialectic according to Newton still calls for ultimate violence, but until the people are ready the Panthers will concentrate on their "survival programs," mostly in Oakland: clinics, breakfasts, storefront factories. And although Newton said as late as 1971 that they never would, Panthers are now running for office in Oakland. Ericka Huggins, who was tried and acquitted as an accomplice in the torture-murder of Party member Alex Rackley, and thus gained for herself the "image" of a revolutionary martyr, now serves as an elected member of the Berkeley agency for distributing antipoverty funds.

All of this activity is based on the unspoken assumption that the country is moving, however slowly, and that the direction cannot and will not be reversed. Though the masses of nonwhite poor remain on the bottom of our society, it is now certain that the piecemeal but widespread welfare support they receive will not be withdrawn—it will even be reformed in positive ways. Even the Republicans have begun to accept the principle of some sort of income guarantees. The country now spends $31 billion on "poverty programs"—enough, says Senator Ribicoff, to eliminate poverty if it could be distributed among the poor, instead of being used, inevitably, to create a poverty industry.

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But tell me, how can a black leader step up in front of his people and say to them, "Look, we are getting welfare, and we're going to get more; eventually we'll get more jobs and more cash, more and more of us will break into the circles of power and prestige, and years from now, if we keep on plugging, the whites may let us in to the point where we draw even with them. Teach your children to be proud and strong, we need take no insult now. But for the time being they, and probably their children too, must go on fighting and suffering the effects of racism."

That is what the man knows in his heart, that is the assumption he acts upon, but he cannot say it perhaps even to himself. What is needed—what has always been strong among black people—is a religion, a set of beliefs wherein the righteous are rewarded, the pure in sprit inherit the earth, and one is never caught in the street without a word for anything that may come up. Traditionally, that religion for American Negroes has been Christianity, and those younger people who have abandoned it as a white man's device for social control do not flounder in scepticism. They replace Christ with other prophets, speaking still of the holy battle and the promised land. If you want attention you had better deliver like a preacher, and what's the sense of preaching if you haven't got the gospel truth.

If you've got that righteous word, you don't have to bring heaven down to earth. You make your hearers happy, for only you and they have an understanding of who will be saved and who damned. You turn their suffering into a medium of communion with as much beauty and power as you can manifest in your own hot flow of language, your own capacity to invoke that sweet moment of righteous vindication. The congregation dissolves their separate selves in communal response to the preacher; and the preacher in turn loses himself to the audience. Religion is the survival program of black people. It's the survival program without which no one could survive a survival program.

Because underneath it there stretches an abyss of fatalism and cynicism too terrible to contemplate.

Now we have young black people believing in the beauty of blackness, in the supreme black pearl of self-assertion: and at various times, in various moods and needs and circumstances, justified by the holy book according to Malcolm, Muhammad or Muhammad Ali. Or many others, and all at once. And to the question, do we believe in violence?, the only righteous answer has got to be yes!

For some that religion is very explicit, involving the saintly pantheon from Marx to Mao Mao. It is their "thing," for the time being; they live for it and by it, and some are ready to die for it. When they speak they are impressively serious and dramatic. The white radicals latch on to them, the media wheels in its cameras, and we have the *image* of revolution.

All kinds of people need that image in this country. Hoover/Mitchell/Wallace types need it, radicals need it, liberals need it: all to tell us who we are, whom we hate, and why what we believe is right. And so we finance it—the Left through contributions, the Right through undercover agents—and put it on TV. Or have we already gotten tired of the program?

For black prisoners, however, the revolutionary religion is a more desperate and accurate reflection of their life situation. How should the world look to a man who is incarcerated in a no-win situation where he falls ever farther away from society? Where his jail and jailers and fellow prisoners and parole board impose on him the most savage forms of American racism?

> It all falls into place. I see the whole thing much clearer now, how fascism has taken possession of this country, the interlocking dictatorship from county level on up to the Grand Dragon in Washington, D.C.

I am quoting George Jackson,[5] who writes

[5] Quotes here are from *Soledad Brother* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972).

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with a weight of authenticity that makes the other new "revolutionary" writers seem calculated and literary.

> The guy who earns a parole surrendered some face in the course of his stay here. . . . No black will leave this place if he has any violence in his past, until they see that thing in his eyes. And you can't fake it, resignation—defeat, it must be stamped clearly across the face.

Jackson had shit thrown in *his* face: the guards encouraged or permitted other prisoners literally to throw shit as they passed his cell. They convinced him they could have a recalcitrant prisoner murdered. Imprisoned at the age of 18 for a $70 hold-up, Jackson spent the next 11 years in jail, often in solitary confinement in conditions where his books and writing materials were repeatedly confiscated. Under the circumstances it is impossible not to respect Jackson's solitary achievement in forging his mind and body into a revolutionary dedication which eventually brought him contact and reinforcement from the outer world. George Jackson freed himself in a way that is impossible for those who bear the stamp of defeat.

Yet he was not free. He was killed in jail, and before that, he was forced, perhaps, to become a murderer. Ultimately the prison system—and the society which permits it—must bear the burden of Jackson's imprisonment and death, of making him, as he put it, "a *total* product of my surroundings."

Perhaps the revolutionary religion served Jackson well; perhaps it was the only way left to cope with his surroundings and at the same time to retain his remarkable sense of humanity. But we cannot say the existence of the kind of jail he was in confirms his historical-political-social analysis. Nor can we say George Jackson was well served by his friends on the outside who confirmed his belief that it did—who may have been accessories, ultimately, in his useless death.

The one element missing from the books of Jackson's writings is any reference to the prison violence in which he may have been involved. Of course Jackson himself could not refer to it, writing from prison. But it is a matter any concerned person would have to know about to decide exactly what happened to Jackson, since it was part of the web that held him. It reminds me of the Rackley case—or of the death of Malcolm X. There is a total social myth to cover the circumstances, and the myth serves so well that no one seems to care what really happened.

That's the trouble with absorbing actual social conditions and events into the fabric of a religion. You can get people killed for no good reason. The prison rebels at Attica, for instance: it is sad to think that many of them believed themselves part of a world revolution which gave them power to start international negotiations for their release. They sent for some popular figures to arrange for their flight to the land of the revolution. And apparently these figures failed to disabuse them.

It is no good pretending that all black convicts in American jails are "political prisoners"—and that the solution to their plight lies simply in setting them free. To believe that is to think in terms of religion, and to be ready to sacrifice the lives of others in a holy cause.

If one believes the revolution is coming, then the prisoners will be freed—from the outside. But what cowardice, what hypocrisy, what vicarious bloodlust to expect *them* to make the revolution! To arm them, urge them to attack, and then say, "Look, the system wiped them out!"

If one knows the revolution is not coming, then one is obliged to deal with the reality of the jail system, not as a matter for "revolutionary suicide," but as a subject for knowledge and pressure and change—all of which are possible without underestimating the injustice or the racism.

Now we have a number of preacher fig-

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ures who will use these prison deaths to add to their own symbolic self-images, as they pursue the mythic confrontation of revolution and fascism. They will find an audience that believes them, but only in the way that people believe preachers; and the preachers will show by their deeds that they do not even believe themselves.

The Plea of Innocence

"FREE Bobby! Free Huey! Free Angela! Free Ericka!" What does this mean?

Does it mean we, the revolutionary forces, are too strong for jails to hold us? We shall free our comrades? That would be a standard revolutionary proclamation.

But in practice, free so-and-so turns out to mean something quite different. It means, let us go because we are who we are. Let us go because you have no right to judge us. Let us go because you can't prove we're guilty. Be fair and let us go.

Up until the split with Eldridge Cleaver in April of 1971, the Black Panther newspaper was full of cartoons of cops getting ambushed, shot and stabbed, under the title, "We have no hangups about revolutionary violence." The analysis in the paper's prose maintained that cops were fascist pigs, that "Amerika" was a fascist state. One would think then that when a Panther was arrested for shooting a cop, he would say, "I did it and I'm glad! On with the revolution!" Certainly if America were truly fascist, or even a "people's democracy," he'd have no chance of a day in court, certainly no chance to advocate killing cops in a freely published paper.

But it turns out that every time a Panther is brought to trial, he maintains his innocence. He appears with a lawyer who screens the jury, attacks the evidence, and usually produces an acquittal. Now I personally am willing to believe in the possibility that every Panther charged may have been innocent, or that he fired in self-defense, or that he was framed. What I am not willing to believe is that the Panthers ever completely believed that America is a closed-up totalitarian society.

That there is police brutality, that cops have unnecessarily killed black people, we know. That the court system has been class- and race-biased, we know also.

But that "revolutionaries" deserve automatically to be freed, not by their comrades but by a supposedly fascist system, that's a difficult idea.

It seems to me inescapable that those who maintain it are using revolutionary attitudes to test and expand the limits of a system they know is at least formally democratic. When the chips are down, it seems the "revolutionaries" would still like to force America to live up to its democratic principles. They rely on their own civil rights, they count on them, lean on them, and apparently want to extend them to those who have had trouble getting them.

This is not to doubt their physical bravery, but when these same people put up an image of uncompromising violence, one feels a twitch of embarrassment. They are more dependent on American liberties than they seem to know—and the more violent the rhetoric, the more dependent the rhetorician.

Take Eldridge Cleaver, who broke with the Panthers because they were reluctant to start urban guerrilla warfare. (In order to be the "spearhead" of anything, Huey replied, you need someone coming along behind.) On October 1, 1968, speaking to white middle-class college students at Stanford University, Eldridge said,

> Good white people, you've got to support me . . . or else the niggers are going to come into the white suburbs and turn the white suburbs into shooting galleries . . . They've got to move on, create conditions so that the pigs of the power structure will be forced to become more and more repressive to continue their exploitation.[6]

Then in an interview in *Playboy* published that same month, when pressed by Nat Hent-

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[6] From *Eldridge Cleaver,* ed. Scheer.

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off to say how such tactics could possibly *win,* Cleaver replied: ". . . we don't accept the analysis that we're doomed because we're in a minority. We don't believe that the majority in this country would permit concentration camps and genocide."

It is clear that Cleaver did not, at bottom, regard American society as totally repressive. The threat of shooting up the suburbs is designed both to create *more* repression and to get "good white people" on his side. To imagine that his side would then contain either the balance of power or a majority voice is a more optimistic reckoning of America than anything one could hear from the most starry-eyed liberal. But the new revolutionary is not obliged to say how the revolution will come or be won. It is his rhetoric which establishes him as a preacher, a figure and a symbol: all the more so because everyone understands perfectly well there will not be a revolution.

Or take Angela Davis, who was put on trial because a gun she purchased was used by Jonathan Jackson to kidnap and kill the judge who was about to try his brother. It did not take a fascist state to try Angela as an accessory under the circumstances. It is one thing to say she should have been given bail; quite another to say she should have automatically been freed. Eventually the prosecution could not convince the jury of Angela's guilt. In the meantime the Communist party did its best simultaneously to get her off and to establish her as a martyr of American fascism.

While Angela was in prison, she taped a half-hour TV interview which was shown on a major network. The interviewer was a friend of hers who opened and closed the interview with a hug, and in between asked a series of questions set up to elicit an unchallenged expression of Angela's political views. With dialectic skill she moved from discrimination in jails and courts to a definition of all black prisoners as political and an indictment of the society as fascist. Upon her acquittal, Angela triumphantly flew to the Soviet Union, where prisoners rot in jail for their politics, or simply for trying to speak to the public in a land where that right is controlled by the state, which also controls the right of citizens to leave or reenter.

It may be noted that the revolutionary hero Angela Davis did not say she supplied the gun and she was glad. She pled innocence, as was her right; and one could hear in her plea the cry of dependency, and reflect on the pathos and weakness of a leader who must rely on the liberties of a society whose injustice she would exploit to the hilt.

Young people, black and white, can hear the cry within the plea of innocence. For a while they raise their voices in psychic identification. When it comes to the crimes that stem from racism, aren't we all in some ultimate sense innocent?—just as all of us are guilty. We can spend a good deal of time in the luxury of proclaiming our innocence and our guilt.

But such proclamations proclaim most of all our helplessness. They weaken the morale, they sap the capacity for long-term political commitment.

Black and White Mirroring

AS THE ROMANCE of violence begins to fade, it is fitting to close with the image of a dead end, endlessly reflected. Helplessness, it seems, begets more helplessness. One of the most pathetic aspects of black violence is the moral ammunition it exchanges with titillated white radicals. Black and white ideologues line up as mirrors for one another, stand face to face and read fantasies of the superman in the slogans printed on one another's foreheads.

And so we get Eldridge Cleaver copying the worst passages of "The White Negro," Angela Davis reciting the bromides of the stalest Stalinism, the Black Panthers glorifying Kim Il Sung and the "workers paradise" of North Korea, Huey Newton solemnly informing us that "contradiction is the ruling principle of the universe."

Sadly, it would be hard for young black

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people to avoid identification with three connected prototypes created more than partly by the psychic needs of white men.

1) *The Noble Savage.* The standard psychological conversion applied to people who are darker and of inferior caste. The process involves a romanticization of the conditions of lower-class life into a state of original innocence, where man is a free, instinctual animal, unhampered by the load of civilized guilt. The main fallacy to this approach is that lower-class man is just as civilized—in the sense that his life is just as unnatural, just as deformed by society—as middle- or upper-class man.

The black man as noble savage is particularly useful for the ideologues of the counter culture, and one could scarcely find a more classic example than this passage from *The Pursuit of Loneliness* by Philip Slater:

> Some blacks are much absorbed in rediscovering and celebrating those characteristics which seem most distinctively black and in sharpest contrast to white Western culture: black expressiveness, creativity, sensuality, and spontaneity being opposed to white constrictedness, rigidity, frigidity, bustle, and hypocrisy. For these blacks, to make too great a commitment to the power game is to forsake one's blackness. Power is a white hangup.

Men used to say the same about women. It's the kind of remark you can make only about people who are carefully kept apart from you.

And I trust the reader will not miss the implicit condescension. From here it is just one step to a lower standard for judging black behavior. If any group is seen as creative and spontaneous, etc., oppressed by rigid, frigid power, their acts of violence can be admired as the natural rebellion of children. From which it would follow that black people cannot be taken seriously in a political sense, i.e., in terms of power-seeking. ("Power is a white hangup.") Which means in turn that it will be harder for black people to take themselves seriously, they will have to fight a tendency to act with the slyness and cynicism of children who are testing parents.

2) *The Hipster.* Norman Mailer in 1957 saw the Negro as the most desperate case of modern man totally trapped and dominated by his surroundings.

> The Negro has the simplest of alternatives: live a life of constant humility or ever-threatening danger. In such a pass where paranoia is as vital to survival as blood, the Negro had stayed alive and begun to grow by following the need of his body where he could.

Morality, Mailer implies, is the luxury of those who share social control, the "Squares."

> But the Negro, not being privileged to gratify his self-esteem with the heady satisfactions of categorical condemnation, chose to move instead in that other direction where all situations are equally valid, and in the worst of perversion, promiscuity, pimpery, drug addiction, rape, razor-slash, bottle-break, what-have-you, the Negro discovered and elaborated a morality of the bottom, an ethical differentiation between the good and the bad in every human activity. . . .

Let's pass by Mailer's symbolic contention that the Negro is a stranger to "categorical condemnation" (which would make him indeed a unique human being). Mailer's central notion, as I read him, is that the Negro in his extreme state of confinement and peril is the one to show us how to break our social bonds, the chafing of which will otherwise reproduce the mass murders, the technological disasters of the 20th century. The way out, the only way "to grow," is to live like psychopaths, seeing every personal encounter as a battlefield on which one must win or lose one's self-conception, one's energy to go on existing.

> . . . the destructive, the liberating, the creative nihilism of the Hip, the frantic search for potent Change may break into the open

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with all its violence, its confusion, its ugliness and horror, and yet like all Change, the violence is better without than within, better as individual actions than as the collective murders of society. . . .[7]

This is not the moment for a full-scale argument with Norman Mailer. Yet it seems to me his theory is based on a false polarity. Are individual and social violence diametric opposites, or do they arise from a common pathology? Does an act of personal violence deplete or increase the energy available for mass violence?

Or to put it in terms more relevant to our discussion: is the black man really a child of nature, striking out against his crushing environment with instinctive creativity—or is his violence part of the environment itself, a sickness inseparable from the larger social disease?

The question is not unimportant, for Mailer's theory has been all too useful and influential in a way he may not have intended. Mailer in effect provided a transitional figure between the noble savage and the black revolutionary. The hip Negro mirrors the white hipster "engaged in one primal battle: to open the limits of the possible for oneself, for oneself alone, because that is one's need." Since he procedes from something "primal" directly to a fulfillment of his "need," there is no point along the way where he can be held morally accountable by any social code. It's not strange that Mailer's admirers missed this; it's a dish better eaten in the dark. Mailer ends up expounding a superman theory which grants moral license to certain individuals only: those who have the primitive instinct/need/courage to take it (even if vicariously). Those who refrain from taking it, or who are simply not strong enough, or who have other things to do, are by process of elimination square and not to be pitied.

One wonders how far this is from the rationale of the generalissimo. Is there that much difference, finally, between the psychopath in the street and the psychopath in the state?

Anyhow, it is no service to connect the black man with either one.

3) *The Black Proletarian.* This is one of those perpetually recurring brainstorms of the American Left. Wouldn't it be nice if history had it arranged for the black man to play the role of the American revolution-bringer. Then every expression of black rage could be seen as a coming to the proper pitch of consciousness, every death a preparation for the purgation to follow. Meanwhile each little sect can claim to attach the mainstream of black action to its own grand future.

What is new is that for the first time a handful of young black people are willing to look into this mirror and be rewarded with the picture of themselves as the local vanguard of an inevitable worldwide process. They in turn hold up a mirror in which the white ideologues see masses of black revolutionaries, for these whites are eager to take the theater of violent language and the desperation of delinquency for the reality of revolutionary commitment. This is a mistake which costs them little, but for which others have already paid with their lives.

Of course one doesn't have to be a radical or an activist to buy the revolutionary image. All one has to be is hip—that is, (Mailer nothwithstanding) a consumer of hip products. In this case the product is a vocabulary of leftist simplisms which enables the users to identify himself with anything anyone thinks is new.

But how many ways are there to say it? To retail any image of the black man which depicts him as specially immune from moral responsibility is to patronize him and ultimately to reinforce his sense of inferiority and inadequacy. To advocate black violence as a political act is politically wrong and leads to the psychic crippling, and the useless deaths, of black and white alike. □

[7] This quote is from *Advertisements for Myself*. All the rest are from "The White Negro," DISSENT, Summer 1957.

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Martin Knelman

Beyond Euphoria: Our Liberated Movies

Anybody who has been going to American movies for the past five years must know that things have been turned inside out since 1948, when Robert Warshow complained that "America as a social and political institution is committed to a cheerful view of life" and "euphoria spreads over our culture like the broad smile of an idiot." Fantasies of doom have replaced fantasies of escape; *Slaughterhouse Five* made a big impression at the Cannes Film Festival last year because Europeans assume it takes great courage to express antiestablishment values in a big commercial movie. They applaud the director's platitudes about "man's capacity to rationalize violence" because they don't understand the absurdly ironical rules of the current market by which huge movie companies try to sell films like *Slaughterhouse Five* to affluent ticket-buyers by reinforcing their own progressive biases. They don't understand, that is, how buying and selling revolution helps to keep the system going. Popular with college students, perhaps because it tells them that in a world gone out of control you might as well go off on your own trip, Vonnegut's novel has been turned into a Hollywood production which, by the very fact that it exists, gives the lie to the assumption behind his parable: that the system survives by stifling dissent and spreading wonderful lies to make people want to go on living.

Slaughterhouse Five was peculiarly out of date by the time it reached the screen. Its attitude belongs to a simpler period, when the mass media were expected to provide propaganda for American values, the American system, and the American way of life. Since the popular arts were designed to appeal to a mass audience, movies for a long time were easily dismissed as a diversion that could be counted on not to be too disturbing —particularly if they came from Hollywood. The movies were supposed to give us soothing fantasies and easy emotional experiences, to which we could go for escape and confirmation of what we already knew. Intellectuals who took this condescending attitude may have overlooked the iconoclasm of *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang, You Only Live Once, Citizen Kane,* and the anarchy implicit in the Marx Brothers; they may have ignored the genius of Griffith and Keaton, and they certainly missed out on considerable pleasure. But they weren't wrong about commercial American movies in general; people didn't look to Hollywood for fresh visions or profound experiences. Yet for at least five years moviemakers and audiences have been liberated from the bland optimism *Slaughterhouse Five* was attacking.

THE DESTRUCTION of the studio system, though economically disastrous, created an exciting new climate in which for the first time American commercial movies could be made for minority audiences. And since the new audiences looked to movies for an emotional charge, as a way of being alive to contemporary experiences, movies could ignore the old pieties. This new phenomenon makes a shambles of the old theory that the system couldn't tolerate subversive thoughts

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in mass culture. It's true that Hollywood produced fairy tales as long as political and economic pressures demanded fairy tales, but the industry turned out to be quite ready to market revolution when it became a salable item. Only 25 years ago criticism of the social and political order was considered so dangerous that it had to be sneaked into movies. Explaining how the gangster movie filled this need for disguise, Warshow wrote: "In ways that we do not easily or willingly define, the gangster speaks for us, expressing that part of the American psyche which rejects the qualities and demands of modern life, which rejects Americanism itself."

It's a measure of how much movies have changed that no disguises are needed or offered in *The Godfather,* that phenomenally popular and surprisingly rich gangster movie of the new age. As we watch the consolidation of power within one of the most powerful families in organized crime, as we watch control pass from one generation to the next, we know that the family will pay the price of many lives, but we don't have to pretend now that the criminals will lose their authority and be defeated by the law. The Corleones' power structure and their style are deliberately compared to those of big government and big business, so that this horrifying family becomes not the antithesis of the American way but a symbol of it. The Corleones' story is presented as a perverted but successful actualization of the American dream, and we see this family of monsters as a parallel rather than a threat to the established order. The family chronicle is beautifully complete, but the movie is not just about this family: it's about secret horrors and false fronts, and how people turn themselves into demons to maintain power and wealth—and that's what makes it the all-American nightmare.

In 1973, we don't need gangsters to reject Americanism. It's being rejected on movie screens all over the world, week in and week out, by movie heroes cast in the mold of Benjamin Braddock (*The Graduate*), Captain America (*Easy Rider*) and Bobby (*Five Easy Pieces*), who summed up the attitude of the modern American screen hero with "Keep on telling me about the good life, Eldon, because it makes me puke." Alienation and disenchantment, once the private attitudes of dissenting intellectuals, are now openly sold as pop culture. There had been rebel heroes before—strong, silent cowboys, Bogey's tough guy, Paul Newman's charming bastard, Marlon Brando's misunderstood delinquent—but a big change began at the end of the 1960s when the romantic hip martyr, already part of the mythology of rock music and pop posters and New Left politics and communal events like the Woodstock festival, was brought into commercial American movies. Peter Fonda in *Easy Rider* and Arlo Guthrie in *Alice's Restaurant* rode out in search of a new frontier that had to do with more than geography. The new movie legend spilled off the screen and into the audience, partly because it was so hard to distinguish between the characters in these movies and the people watching them and partly because the movies were about experiences and attitudes that the audience shared. They conveyed a feeling of community among the young and rootless, people adrift and cut off from everything and everyone except others like themselves. The negative side of that mood was the sense that something had gone terribly sour, summed up by Jack Nicholson's line in *Easy Rider,* "This used to be a hell of a good country; I don't know what's going on."

More traditional kinds of movies have not stopped coming out, but they don't create much excitement; formula Westerns, comedies, love stories, and thrillers are the deadwood of the industry, keeping the theaters supplied with what the industry calls "product." People who don't have time for movies often have a soft spot for genre pictures, associating them with their own childhood innocence, but anyone who actually goes to them knows you can get an overdose of tedium from sitting through tired reruns of

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the same old used-up stories, trotted out week after week and year after year. What these movies represent is the perpetuation of myths that nobody cares about any more, kept on by customs, inertia, and commercial convenience. There's something musty and hopeless about the atmosphere of theaters playing these films; the responses of the audience suggest indifference and apathy, as if the customers come because they can't kick the habit, not because they expect to have a good time.

THE NEW AUDIENCE demands more immediacy and relevance; even if it isn't very good, an American movie about contemporary experience and attitudes can make contact in a more direct, more personal way than other kinds of movies; belonging to the same psychic environment, the audience is alive to what is happening on the screen. *Easy Rider, Alice's Restaurant,* and *Woodstock* created a youth mythology—an electronic feedback to confirm the existence of the counter culture—and their popularity caused a small revolution in an industry that was coming apart anyway. For a while you couldn't drop into a movie without getting hit by an apocalypse. *The Strawberry Statement, Zabriskie Point, Joe, End of the Road, Diary of a Mad Housewife, Little Murders,* and *Carnal Knowledge* dumped on the present conditions of American life, and *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here, They Shoot Horses, Don't They?, Little Big Man,* and *Catch-22* found nightmares in the American past. And just when the white audience had disintegrated, there emerged a huge black audience eager for its own heroes to attack white America.

Although the attitudes expressed by the most important pictures of the past few years have been peculiarly modern, whether they were dealing with the present or not, it's surprising how many of them have been developed from traditional forms. *Bonnie and Clyde* took a fresh approach to outlaw lore by presenting the Barrow gang as innocent bumpkins who turned to crime for fame and glamor; and by mixing farce with violence and turning conventions inside out, it pointed up the pleasure of surprise and opened the way to new treatments of old legends. *Easy Rider* reassembled the frontier myth for the rock-and-drug culture, replacing the horses with motorbikes and the cowboys with hippie martyrs looking for a new America, and seductively used the moral simplicities of the *Western* genre to express the youth culture's paranoia about the straight world. *The Godfather* not only resurrected the genre of gangster movies that flourished in the '30s but smashed right through the old patterns to achieve a new grandeur and a new level of social realism. And with *McCabe and Mrs. Miller,* Robert Altman offered an ironic new view of pioneer legend which, coming at a time when Americans felt more helpless and hemmed in than ever, seemed like a bittersweet elegy for all the elusive, romantic American dreams that never could have been.

II

Breaking through the old taboos of mass culture is a healthy impulse, but it doesn't necessarily produce art. Maybe *Portnoy's Complaint* couldn't have been filmed 10 or 20 years ago, but does that make Ernest Lehman's movie an advance? The genius of the Philip Roth novel was to integrate two forms of Jewish American narrative that had always been separate: the literary chronicles of the educated writers whom Norman Podhoretz called "the Jewish heirs of Henry James" and the low-brow comics who made the experience of the Jewish immigrant in America a staple of popular entertainment. Finding the technical solution in the chant on the couch delivered by his hero-victim, Roth incorporated the stand-up comic's monologue in a dazzling literary form. Like Lenny Bruce, whose wild and obscene stream of associations cut through the bourgeois decorum of entertainment, Roth used dirty secrets and uninhibited language as a form of liberation, as a way of expressing

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comedy and pain together. The movie makes a superficial stab at following the novel's structure, starting with Portnoy on the couch and then picking up flashback sequences, but this is a kind of brainless pseudofidelity which simply doesn't work. If there was an imaginative way to film this novel, it has certainly evaded Lehman, who produced, directed, and wrote this loutish movie.

Richard Benjamin played an earlier Roth hero in *Goodbye, Columbus* and wasn't too bad, but he simply doesn't have the capacity for fury and for the conflict of love and hate the role of Portnoy demands. Although Karen Black as The Monkey creates a funny, vulnerable extension of the character in the book, her bizarre affair with Portnoy loses its point because we don't see how his instability is linked to his childhood. The trite family flashbacks contain very little sense of how Sophie's demonstrative love veils strong demands, driving the child to justify his parents' lives, and Lee Grant gives the sort of flat caricature of Jewish mothers one might expect in a Neil Simon comedy. Since the exaggeration is not in the mind of Portnoy looking back in anger but in the playing of the scenes, they seem simply overacted. Portnoy complains that he's living in the middle of a Jewish joke, and it isn't funny. The book was funny but not only funny; it told the painful part that Sam Levenson and Myron Cohen left out. The irony of the movie is that it turns the material back into Sam Levenson. Censorship is no longer a problem on the screen, but the obscene words and ideas have become meanspirited because the context that gave them their sting has been so thinned out they now have no emotional meaning. The movie demonstrates what goes wrong when the same old flat methods of hack moviemaking are applied to daring new material. That's one reason why lines that are still funny and ferocious when you read them sound gross and ugly when you hear them in a movie theater, and dirty in a whole new way.

The difference between an important good new movie and an important bad new movie usually has less to do with the social and political attitude it articulates than with the style it finds to present them. *Slaughterhouse Five,* which strikes a tone of scorn for square American values, is handsomely designed and photographed, with such fancy touches as Dede Allen's dazzling editing and a cultural tour of pre-bomb Dresden that looks like an episode from the *Civilization* television series, and snatches of Bach arranged by Glenn Gould to lend just the right tone of cool irony. But the smoothness, the cleverness, the brilliant technique only intensify one's awareness of the vacuousness of the material. The movie treats the fluidity of time with almost throwaway ease, arranging episodes by association rather than chronology as Billy Pilgrim, the flipped-out war veteran, takes refuge in tripping backward and forward in time. But the connections it makes this way tend to be fatuous or simply pointless, so that a technique that was an exciting breakthrough in the narrative arts not so very long ago becomes as trivial as fancy angles and cuts in a beer commercial.

Compared to Ingmar Bergman's *Shame,* whose theme was also what war does to people sucked into it, or *The Sorrow and the Pity,* the superb Marcel Ophuls documentary about the Nazi occupation of France, *Slaughterhouse Five* is an embarrassment, not only because it approaches the subject with infinitely less intelligence, feeling, and artistry but because its slickness is morally offensive. You don't forget for a moment that this is a glittering production, and that's one of the major reasons why Vonnegut's defeatist whimsy—which mixes pop fatalism and mysticism with bits of science fiction and grim little jokes—seems so much phonier on the screen than in print.

The novel was ironic and worn-out, with a flat, laconic prose style to convey weariness and numbness. George Roy Hill's direction and Stephen Geller's screenplay strike a far more sneering tone than the

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novel, and the satire is conceived in such a crude, mean spirit that the subject is no longer how simple people are victimized. Michael Sacks, made up to look innocent in youth but tense and sinister in middle age, hides some of the weakness and confusion by being simply enigmatic, and by suggesting, with his clumsy gawkiness and his droop face, elements of foolishness and humorous ineptitude and a sad blankness. But everyone around him is treated with contempt: his grasping, aggressively stupid slob of a wife; a goonish son who desecrates cemeteries but makes up for the misdeeds by volunteering for Vietnam; an earnest army buddy who's dismissed as a boob because he teaches at a technical school instead of a university; Lions Club squares who sing *There'll Be Some Changes Made;* and a daughter whose reaction to her mother's death in her car is "But she drove a Cadillac." The audience is made to feel sophisticated at the expense of the characters, and maybe we're supposed to be so flattered that we won't notice how the movie ridicules naive Andy Hardy values while pushing a point of view that's no less vacuous and a lot uglier. As we leave Billy 423 billion miles from earth making love to a starlet on a dome that looks like Buckminster Fuller's U.S. pavilion at Expo '67, the jocular, mocking tone makes it clear that something is being satirized—but what, exactly?

This odd contradiction of fantastic technical sophistication in the service of smug posturing has become almost a defining characteristic of classy bad movies in the past few years. The fact that *A Clockwork Orange* is more posh, hip, and knowing than *The Wild Angels*—a crummy bike movie that also justified youth fascism and antisocial terrorism by pointing to the degradation of the world around the mixed-up kids—hardly makes it more palatable. The Anthony Burgess novel could have made a good movie, and the time was certainly right for it, but through one of the more fiendish ironies of contemporary culture, the writer achieved his breakthrough to fame and fortune only when his book was turned into a movie that distorted everything he was trying to say. Burgess wanted to make his readers see the cost of moral choice; his point was that it's better to commit evil through free will than to have good imposed on us. But by making Alex, the thug hero of *A Clockwork Orange,* a charming scoundrel and everyone else fools and swine, Stanley Kubrick's movie tells us that Alex's choices are right. Burgess may not have realized it, but his book provided Kubrick with the ideal vehicle to combine the freakout technology of *2001* and the hip-nihilistic philosophy of *Dr. Strangelove. A Clockwork Orange* is a trip into the nightmare future the way *2001* was a trip into outer space. During his treatment Alex is told: "When we're healthy we respond to the hateful with nausea." But we aren't supposed to react to the movie with nausea, although some of us do; we're supposed to enjoy it the way the unadulterated Alex enjoys rape, murder, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony—as pure sensual experiences. Kubrick doesn't merely depict decadence; he provides the excuse for enjoying it by presenting a world so far out of control that only fools and squares cling to outmoded notions of decency and progress. The slick decadence is there to be wallowed in; you can feel it from the grand sweep of the camera pulling back to let us take it all in. The heavy, self-important style cues the audience for every reaction, like a dictator signaling his henchmen when he wants his jokes to be laughed at. The irony is that a movie that attacks programmed behavior and proselytizes for the freeing of human impulses gives virtually no freedom to the impulses of the audience.

III

Francis Ford Coppola brought surprising depth to a big-studio style of moviemaking in *The Godfather,* but most of the exciting developments in recent American movies have come through the search for more

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open, flexible ways of working. Having broken away from backlot artificiality and the rule of inflexible studio tycoons, moviemakers have been groping for new styles to suit new subject matter and new attitudes. Craftsmanship and professionalism in the old sense have become suspect; one of the tests of integrity in the new climate is that a movie shouldn't look too much like a Hollywood production.

The reality we pick up through the new documentaries and public-affairs shows on television has a rougher texture, and we are more likely now to believe in the intelligence that looks as if it just happens to have been caught than in the meticulously planted information of a carefully staged movie. The director of *Billy Jack,* Tom Laughlin—who also plays its title character, a saintly but violent protector of a pacifist Indian community—uses kids playing more or less themselves to give the young audience a sense of participation. The film's fresh quality cuts through a crude story about a pregnant girl who runs away to a freedom school, and the freedom school community—representing a new kind of pioneer society, uncorrupted by the prejudices and injustices of the old boobs in town—comes to life on screen with an impact that creates a strong emotional core, especially in some marvelous improvisational street-theater skits. All decked out in rock music, faded jeans, and the great outdoors, this counterculture morality play is much more persuasive emotionally than intellectually. It establishes a bond with its audiences giving them a psychodramatic chance to work off hostility against an educational and political establishment which they experience as repressive and stifling. Although its themes aren't very different from those of *A Clockwork Orange*—both movies say the young must be given the freedom to go their own way—*Billy Jack* has a sense of innocence and passion that work as an antidote to the glossy cynicism of *A Clockwork Orange.*

Sometimes, however, an authentic texture can camouflage more subtle forms of manipulation. *Marjoe* is a compelling study of a real-life con-man preacher who is part Elmer Gantry and part Mick Jagger, and it's carried by the considerable show-biz talent of its subject and by the sensational charge of seeing the Jesus mania exposed just when it has caught on with the counter culture as the ultimate Dionysian freakout. Marjoe's explanation for what he's doing seems awfully confused, and as you watch him going through his brilliant miracle *shtick* at a revival meeting and then casually joking about the shame of it while being interviewed in a motel room, it becomes disconcertingly clear that the most interesting material in this act is what we aren't being told about how and why the movie was made. What kind of dealing goes on to produce a hip movie that invites us to dig a charming hypocrite and laugh at the squares who fall for him? There's something creepy about realizing that just by being in the audience, you have become part of the racket that's exploiting pathetic, ignorant people.

Despite one's reservations, *Marjoe* shows us a piece of American life that we didn't used to get at the movies. The challenge now is to integrate this new social and political range with the screen's traditional storytelling role. The most talented moviemakers of the past few years have often worked toward new styles of social realism, reaching for more depth, more looseness and richer textures without abandoning traditional forms.

In *Born to Win,* which flopped so badly almost no one saw it, Ivan Passer, a Czech, not only dared to take on a project that depended on an intuitive grasp of the American style and idiom but succeeded. *Born to Win* shows more effectively than any of the other recent movies about New York in decay how comedy and horror go together in Manhattan lowlife; careening from nutty slapstick to smart romance to crime caper to brutal big-town horror story at a clip that takes one's breath away, the movie demon-

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strates that glee and self-destruction are different sides of the same scene in the absurd frenzy of the freaky city.

In *Fat City* John Huston catches the style and flavor of the boxing scene in Stockton, California—not the glamorous world of the champs but the shabby milieu of the scramblers who get their brains bashed and never quite make it—with absolute fidelity, achieving perhaps an ideal marriage of fiction and documentary realism. Huston has a flawless feeling for marginal details, and his movie is memorable for the look and texture of the gym and the bar, and for the brilliant use of local characters, especially a young black who delivers a rhetorical monologue explaining all a fighter really needs is the will to "kick ass." Yet these details are contained within a movie that is highly stylized through Conrad Hall's shadowy blue-green imagery, Leonard Gardner's sparse Hemingway-style dialogue, and Huston's solemnly measured pacing.

On the other hand, *The Candidate,* which tries to show how the ideals of a young, energetic politician vanish by the time he gets elected, is an illustration of what happens when some of the techniques of the new film journalism are applied to a story that's too conventionally thin to support them. Director Michael Ritchie captures the behind-the scenes flavor of a political campaign with smart, brisk documentary authenticity, and that gives his movie a certain feel of credibility. Yet the ambience is undone by an inadequate dramatic presentation. The hero's problem is that he gets sucked into everything he thought he was against and becomes a prisoner of his own political strategists. But going behind the scenes, we don't find any difference between the image and the man. With his clean-cut good looks and his supercool style, Robert Redford is an image-maker's dream to begin with—and since we never understand what excitingly dangerous things he is prevented from saying, the premise of the movie doesn't make much sense. When at the end of a TV debate the candidate finally cuts loose, his comments are so general that we don't know how to take them. It's impossible to believe that this was what his image-makers were trying to stop him from saying, since it sounds exactly like the sort of dynamic but essentially empty rhetoric that image-makers love to concoct. When a movie sets out to expose political images as superficial and manufactured, it doesn't help if the movie itself seems superficial and manufactured.

THE USE OF NONACTORS and existing communities can add an extra dimension, but even more remarkable is the influence documentary techniques have had on directors trying to achieve the same effects by using sets and actors in looser ways. In *McCabe and Mrs. Miller,* Robert Altman—presenting his own version of the frontier myth—built a mining town and then populated it. By using actors who weren't in the script, Altman gave his community continuity, density, and identity; and by taking a deliberately understated approach, he broke through the planted feeling of conventional set-ups and created the impression that in the act of filming them he was discovering his characters and story spontaneously. This new, open-ended method of making movies calls for new styles of acting. It calls for the improvisational gift of Warren Beatty, as the mumbling, sweetly inept pioneer capitalist in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller,* or for George Segal, whose portrait of a manic New York junkie in *Born to Win* puts the drug addict in the line of foolhardy urban heroes who are exciting because they take crazy chances and don't hold back. It is not enough in a movie like *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* or *Born to Win* for an actor to memorize his lines and bring his performance to the set. When movie actors are open to the complexities of experience and the intensity of the moment, the camera must be like a fix that lights them up and makes them alive to new possibilities.

Something like this apparently happened

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in *Sounder*. Martin Ritt, the director, has used several nonactors wonderfully well in supporting parts—a black preacher, several children, a white judge and a white clerk—but more important, he has developed a complex natural depth in his leading actors, whose impact can only partly be explained by the fact that they come fresh, without the strong association of previous big roles. *Sounder* tells the story of a black sharecropping family in the '30s, and you really believe in this family as a family. There's a complex set of emotional relationships beneath the surface of the dialogue, expressed in looks and gestures and nuances and a wonderful emphasis on physical touching. Paul Winfield as the father and Kevin Hooks as the boy have a rapport that explains what ties the generations together and what separates them—the son's drive to break out of the family's cycle of defeat and the father's hope that giving his son that drive will mean his own life hasn't been all defeat. But the movie belongs most of all to Cicely Tyson as the mother. Expressing a stunning range of emotion and perception at a nonverbal level, she becomes a great symbol of the strength and quiet endurance, with a Biblical resonance and a sense of inner resources, that suggest Dilsey, the servant in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*.

The emergence of a new black audience in the past few years has been an important phenomenon politically, economically, and sociologically, but until *Sounder* the movies produced for this audience had been generally atrocious, from the raw, independently made *Sweet Sweetback's Baadassss Song* to the slick studio-tooled *Shaft's Big Score*. You could see why black audiences needed to be freed from the Hattie McDaniel image of an earlier period and from the phony pieties of '60s movies like *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner,* which showed it's all right to let your daughter marry a black provided he's greater than Albert Schweitzer. But that didn't make the emergence of black superstuds and antiwhite brutality a cultural advance—even if it provided a psychodramatic release for black audiences. Although it was produced and directed by whites, *Sounder* is the first movie that meets the emotional need for strong black screen characters. We know this boy is going to make it, and we know why—and because we know why, the movie tells us in its own modest terms much more than journalists and sociologists and political analysts can about the reason for the black revolution, and the price of it.

Sounder comes as a reminder that breaking through the cheerful view of life is not enough; we have to break through predigested sentiments and directed reactions, too. What *Sounder* has in common with the other most exhilarating American movies of the past few years is that it gives us room to participate and discover complex and subtle insights instead of having points thrust upon us. Ritt's open, leisurely style lets us experience the texture and the pace of the land and the people; we're given a richly detailed sense of how good, simple people are affected by their work and what they do in their spare moments and how all aspects of their life are defined by their sense of the space and the country around them.

The affirmative note *Sounder* strikes is not a fake happy ending but a dramatic fact that has been honestly earned. The new freedom of the screen has been extended to the audience, and it's intoxicating; it expands our awareness. You really do feel euphoria at the end of *Sounder,* and it isn't the kind of euphoria that was once said to have spread over American culture like the broad smile of an idiot. The license to reject Americanism has opened up the opportunity to show us America with fresh eyes. And when movies meet that challenge, they prove that the term popular art is not necessarily a contradiction in terms. □

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Stephen Miller

The Politics of the "True Self"

A good case can be made for calling the last 25 years the Age of Freud, for his thought has reached everywhere, reached especially to a kind of contemporary writing I would like to call—to coin an ungainly phrase—psycho-political prophecy. Even if some of these psycho-political prophets rarely refer to Freud, their basic assumptions reveal that they have been affected by Freudian modes of thought. Unlike Freud, however, these writers dwell on the need for radical psychological change. They call for a politics that will bring about the liberation of the "true self." This approach to politics, I think, is full of dangers.

The true self travels under a lot of names: the autonomous self, the creative self, the Dionysian self, the authentic self. In *The Politics of Experience,* R. D. Laing says that we are "strangers to our true selves," and he calls for "the dissolution of the normal ego, that false self. . . ." In *Eros and Civilization,* Herbert Marcuse speaks of his hope for a future in which the "autonomous personality, in the sense of creative 'uniqueness' and fullness of its existence," will be realized not by a few but by all. Theodore Roszak sees this new self as Dionysian and full of a profound and holy kind of irrationality. In *The Making of a Counter Culture,* he asks for a "new culture in which the nonintellective capacities of the personality—those capacities that take fire from visionary splendor and the experience of human communion—become the arbiter of the good, the true, and the beautiful." Laing, Marcuse, and Roszak want politics to create the conditions that would enable man to undergo radical psychological change, would enable man to assert that part of his self which has been suppressed by social and political norms—his "true" self.

The assumption that there can be radical political change goes against the grain of Freud's thought; but the idea of thinking about politics in psychological terms comes from Freud who, as Philip Rieff says, "undermined the ancient concern of political philosophy and substituted for it the inquiry of a political psychology, asking in what manner and degree must the individual be constrained within his social relations." Laing, Marcuse, and Roszak accept the Freudian idea that society is a repressive force that causes tremendous damage to the self. Unlike Freud, however, they think that there can be a civilization without discontent. Theirs is a millenarian politics based on conceptions found in the work of Freud.

Although Laing, Marcuse, and Roszak would place themselves on the left side of the political spectrum, their emphasis on the isolated individual who is trying to find his "true self" makes it difficult to assign them any such traditional political label. They may speak of the evils of capitalism or Stalinism, but when they use the word "liberation" they mean liberating ourselves from our "false" selves. These writers insist that it is the self that is in chains—not the American migrant worker, the Brazilian peasant, the Czechoslovakian intellectual. Preoccupied with psychological liberation, they tend to gloss over distinctions between different societies, different political regimes.

Now Marshall Berman, who is

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another psycho-political prophet, says in *The Politics of Authenticity* that "the search for authenticity . . . is bound up with a radical rejection of things as they are. It begins with an insistence that the social and political structures men live in are keeping the self stifled, chained down, locked up." Which social and political structures? Of which society? The answers to such questions, questions that must be raised in any discussion of politics, cannot be found in the work of these writers, for these distinctions don't seem important to them.

THERE ARE, however, distinctions to be made among these advocates of a true self. Marcuse's analysis is more traditionally political than the others, for he thinks that radical psychological change can come about only after radical political change. Most recently, in fact, Marcuse has become suspicious of any exclusive concern with psychological change. In a recent essay, "Art and Revolution," he says that "the mixture of Marxism and mysticism, of Lenin and Dr. R. D. Laing does not work; it vitiates the political impulse." In this essay Marcuse seems to separate himself from those who advocate psychological liberation, while still implying that in the long run, once his political goals have been realized, there can be such a radical psychological change.

The Marcuse of "Art and Revolution" would, I imagine, dislike the work of Norman O. Brown, the psycho-political prophet who is most heavily indebted to Freudian conceptions. In *Life Against Death,* Brown exhorts us to embrace and affirm "instinctual reality—Dionysian consciousness," which is another way of saying that we should let our id rule us instead of our ego. Brown does not seem concerned with political change, but he does say that such a radical psychological change will enable us to avoid a repetition of the disasters of 20th-century history. Thus even for Brown psychology is intimately connected with politics. Brown would agree, I think, with Marshall Berman, who ends his book with the following remarks:

> Our society is filled with people who are ardently yearning and consciously striving for authenticity, . . . countless anonymous men and women all over who are fighting, desperately and against all odds, simply to preserve, to feel, to be themselves. All these seekers after authenticity are just beginning to learn a fact of life which our first seekers always knew: that whoever you are, or want to be, you may not be interested in politics, but politics is interested in you. [See p. xix.]

Berman, like the other psycho-political prophets, thinks that a radical political reordering of things would enable everyone to "be himself."

It is not clear, though, from Berman's book just how this pursuit of authenticity is related to politics. The countless anonymous young men and women Berman mentions presumably seek authenticity by themselves, isolated from any social or political group. If authenticity is a political question, then we would expect some discussion of how we are to go about creating the social and economic conditions that would enable authenticity to flourish; but Berman gives us no such discussion. And when Laing, Roszak, and Brown ask us to dissolve our normal ego, to find our visionary splendor, or to embrace our Dionysian consciousness, they mean, I suppose, that we do these things by our own efforts; they are private achievements. Even Marcuse is not clear about how we begin to work for political change. At the end of *One-Dimensional Man,* he raises the possibility of a melodramatic "Great Refusal" by "the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and colors, the unemployed and the unemployable . . . [who] exist outside the democratic process. . . ." He doesn't make distinctions among these groups, some of whom don't believe they are outside the democratic process, despite their unemployment.

Yet these writers insist that their visionary theorizing is political theorizing. According

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to them, it is the narrow conceptions of politics that have made the United States the way it is. If we take them at their word and call their goal a political goal, then it is certainly an unusually vague one, for they want people not only to *have* jobs, food, political freedom, a decent standard of living, and all the other tangible goals we normally associate with political activity; they also want people to *be* happy—happy because their true self flourishes.

The politics of happiness is not only a contemporary phenomenon. About one hundred and eighty years ago Thomas Paine said the following: "But what we now see in the world, from the Revolutions of America and France, are a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man, and combining moral with political happiness and national prosperity." These millenarian hopes were very common during the early days of the French Revolution, and they gave birth to notions of happiness that, like Paine's, seem hazy. Yet Paine's idea of happiness is clearer than the idea of happiness implied in the work of the psycho-political prophets, for Paine qualifies the noun with two adjectives, implying that the happiness he is speaking of is a *public* happiness, the tangible result of political freedom. And political freedom makes man morally happy because he no longer has to lie, no longer has to assent to doctrines of the state that he thinks are false or pernicious.

The psycho-political prophets, by contrast, are not especially interested in public happiness. The happiness they envision would come about through the liberation of the self from society, not through the opening up of another realm of society—the political realm—to people who have not been in it before. Moreover, their preoccupation with the *politics* of a private liberation of the self is dangerous because it implies that our private happiness is connected with the doings of the government. From there it is one step to suggesting that the government should control us in order to make us happy; we enter the world of benevolent totalitarianism. The Declaration of Independence speaks of our inalienable right to "the pursuit of happiness," but it does not say that we can all attain happiness or that the government is responsible for our happiness.

IT MAY be objected that I've taken some ideas of these writers out of context in order to exaggerate their negative implications. But it is not easy to know exactly what their ideas are, since their definitions of the true self are not precise. Perhaps they cannot help but be vague, for the true self is a concept that can never be adequately defined. There is no way for anyone to know if what he is doing or has done is authentic, creative, Dionysian—in other words expressive of his true self. Authenticity is a feeling one has about oneself; it cannot be tested or measured. Any action may feel authentic and—five minutes later—inauthentic. We have no way of observing our own authenticity or, of course, anyone else's.

I'm not suggesting that we should dismiss all such feelings because they cannot be measured. I am suggesting that these feelings have little place in politics. It is easy to see how a politics that advocates authenticity could degenerate into a confusion of claims and counterclaims, of accusations and counteraccusations, each faction insisting that it alone possesses authenticity. In such a climate of feeling, political discourse would break down.

Yet it would be wrong to dismiss completely such intangible things as feelings from political discourse, since any complex society that is not held together solely by fear must be cemented by the feeling of trust. Loss of trust is dangerous because it leads men to have faith in only one person—themselves. Reduced to believing only in the reality of their private worlds, they dismiss the public realm as a world of lies where everyone says one thing and does another, where everyone is out to get what he can get. They become

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cynical and more than usually apathetic about politics. And they may even come to prefer the "honest" extremist—whether of the Left or the Right—who, they think, at least says what he means. Whether this loss of trust is objectively justified or not is beside the point. For if people feel this way, then they will act on their feeling, will interpret what they hear and read according to this feeling. A massive loss of trust together with self-pity—"Every public figure lies and no one understands *my* problems"—can be an explosive mixture, dangerous to a democratic society.

Perhaps it is this malaise—usually associated with youth but visible in many different sectors of American society—that the psycho-political prophets are addressing themselves to when they speak of an authentic self. In *Macbeth*, where we see a society whose members have lost their trust of each other, Ross says:

> But cruel are the times when we are traitors
> And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumor
> From what we fear, yet know not what we fear
> But float upon a wild and violent sea
> Each way and none. [IV. ii. 18–22]

They do not know themselves because they do not know where they stand with regard to others; they are reduced to living in a private world of fear and inactivity. Without trust political action is impossible, and Macbeth will remain in power as long as mutual suspicion prevents people from forming political alliances. Therefore in Act IV Malcolm, the son of the slain king, cautiously and desperately tries to see if he can trust Macduff, for Malcolm knows that if he doesn't find someone whom he can rely upon he is lost.

Malcolm is not striving for authenticity. He wants to find someone else he can trust, so that he can know where he stands with regard to others and consequently know himself. Those who strive for authenticity, on the other hand, want to know themselves independently of others, want to devote themselves to a private religion of self-realization. I use the word "religion" advisedly: trying to find one's authentic self is a post-Judaeo-Christian version of trying to have faith in God. And if the quest for authenticity is such a displaced religious quest, then confusing it with political problems will inevitably cause disappointment and despair. There can never be a political remedy for a private loss of faith—whether in God or in oneself—unless, that is, one thinks of such secular religions as Nazism or Communism as political remedies. The psycho-political prophets are aware of the malaise that affects contemporary American society, the loss of trust in the political realm, but their remedies are the wrong medicine for the disease, even though it is hard to say what the right medicine is for such an intangible feeling as a loss of trust. In fact, the remedies themselves are symptoms of the disease.

II

Berman rightly devotes most of *The Politics of Authenticity* to Rousseau, who was the first writer to be especially interested in how man becomes "untrue" to himself when he enters society, how he "lives constantly outside himself, and only knows how to live in the opinion of others. . . ." Rousseau however is not read much nowadays, at least not in the United States. In this country the writer of the past who has become canonized as the chief saint in the gospel of authenticity is William Blake.

A key word in Blake's writing is "energy." In "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" the devil, who is good in Blake's mythology, says: "Energy is the only life," and "Energy is Eternal Delight." Although Blake never uses the words "true self" or "authenticity," he would have agreed, I think, to the notion that the expression of one's energy is the expression of one's true and authentic self. For Blake this energy is a potential force in all of us, but in most cases it is a force that remains repressed and thwarted because of the

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socializing process. In his famous poem "London" the city becomes a symbol of all the social forces that—to use Blake's word —"charter" us in life. Or, rather, it is we who charter ourselves in order to endure the experience of a meaningless life of routine.

What are we supposed to do about this chartering? Roszak uses as an epigraph to his book a quotation from Blake that seems to be a political exhortation: "Rouse up, O Young Men of the New Age! set your foreheads against the ignorant Hirelings! For we have Hirelings in the Camp, the Court & the University, who would, if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War." Blake's remarks are not very clear as a guideline for political action; Blake is a poet, not a planner of revolution, and his writing does not contain a program for political change. The poem "London" is not a political tract but a nightmarish "Song of Experience."

Blake, in fact, is less interested in revolutionary politics than in revolutionary art and poetry—in an art that is radically different from the work of Joshua Reynolds and in a poetry that is radically different from the work of Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson. Many of his aphorisms are typically Romantic criticisms of neoclassical ideas about poetry and art: "One power alone makes a Poet: Imagination, The Divine Vision," and "He who Can be bound down is No Genius. Genius cannot be Bound; it may be Renderd [sic] Indignant & Outrageous." We are not very far from what Keats and Coleridge say about genius and poetry.

Yet we can't so easily confine Blake to the house of art and literature. When Keats and Coleridge speak of genius they are clearly speaking of artistic genius, whereas Blake is not. In many of his aphorisms Blake implies that a genius is anyone who knows how to express his energy. And when Blake says that "the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," he is referring to a road that goes in the opposite direction not only from neoclassical art and poetry but also from neoclassical morality. For Pope and Johnson the mind must restrain its wayward energies and enthusiasms, whereas for Blake anyone who tries to suppress the energy in himself or in anyone else is evil. Although Blake's writing does not contain any political program, we see in it the beginnings of a politics of the true self, a politics inseparable from a new notion of morality preaching that the greatest good is the expression of one's energy.

It is tendentious to examine Blake's writing as if it were doctrine, as if Blake were not a poet but a psychologist or a political scientist. Yet fragments of Blake's are continually quoted out of context in this way. And, taken out of context, these fragments seem dangerously antinomian. It is one thing not to obey the laws of neoclassicism, another thing to express contempt for all law. It is one thing to express one's energy in poetry, another thing to express it in any way one wants to. The "genius" who hates to be bound might become like the members of the Brethren of the Free Spirit, a late medieval sect who believed and acted as if they were above all laws. As one adept wrote:

> When a man has truly reached the great and high knowledge he is no longer bound to observe any law or any command, for he has become one with God. . . . He shall take from all creatures as much as his nature desires and craves, and shall have no scruples of conscience about it, for all created things are his property. . . .*

Blake would have been horrified by the gnostic elitism of the Brethren of the Free Spirit, and he would not have accepted the idea of the genius as murderer. "Murder," he said, "is Hindering Another." Yet the worship of an undefined standard of energy as the only authentic quality of the self makes it possible for someone to be or suppose himself to be authentic by expressing his energy

* Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 179.

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in violent ways. Many of Blake's proverbs can be used to justify an evil but therapeutic release of energy. He did say that "Active Evil is better than Passive Good"—better because the person is expressing, not repressing, his energy.

TO RAISE the specter of violence as a form of authenticity one need not go back as far as the late Middle Ages. In his introduction to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth,* Jean-Paul Sartre says that "irrepressible violence . . . is man re-creating himself," a remark not very different from Blake's comment that "violent passions emit the real, good & perfect tones." For Sartre such violence is killing two birds with one stone: one destroys bourgeois society and at the same time one achieves one's authentic self. Discussing Sartre and Fanon in her book, *On Violence,* Hannah Arendt notes that both writers have revived the Sorelian interpretation of Bergson's *Creative Evolution,* whereby man expresses his "élan vital" by being violent. Violence becomes a kind of holy intuition, the opposite of the mechanical processes of the ego, and Fanon himself in *The Wretched of the Earth* speaks of the "creative madness" inherent in violent action. To be sure, both Fanon and Sartre are speaking about a violence that is directed toward particular political ends, but there is no reason why their psychological view of violence couldn't be used for causes they would abhor. Rather than a concern with ends, what we see in Sartre's introduction and in some, though not all, of Fanon's work is a mystique of means: *political violence as therapy.*

A radical rejection of things as they are in the name of authenticity, therefore, can easily become a destructive antipolitics that cares less about particular goals than about "being oneself," no matter what the cost is to others. In some ways the worshipers of authenticity are like the Skinnerians: both want to do away with society as we know it —the one through behavioral control, the other through therapeutic release. Both fervently hope that by doing so they will create a new man. Yet their new man does not look very attractive—either a behavioral zombie, programmed so that he would act like a kind of super Boy Scout, or a frustrated solitary, like those citizens of *The Waste Land* who are "each in his prison/Thinking of the key. . . ."

Uninterested in anything but finding their true selves, these solitaries would be bored with the mundane questions of political change, bored with concrete discussions of particular social and political issues. Boredom with democratic politics is not necessarily a bad thing; life would be intolerable if everyone continually devoted himself to political questions. However, the boredom of such seekers could prove dangerous because it might turn into rage against the limitations inherent in every individual life. Pascal said that "Man is neither an angel nor a beast, and the unfortunate thing is that he who would act like an angel acts like a beast." Authenticity may be such an angelic illusion, and those who seek the angelically authentic within themselves may end up as beasts who yearn for any kind of apocalyptic change in order to assuage their own failure to achieve their true selves.

But beasts may be too strong a word here, and I would rather not end on a note of easy condemnation. Rousseau, as John Plamenatz has said, "understood . . . man's profound need to feel at home in the world." Many people, not only young people, do not feel at home in American society, but what they yearn for is not authenticity, I think, but trust—the mutual trust that bound the ideal political community Rousseau set forth in *The Social Contract.* I do not question this feeling of not being at home in American society; there are many good reasons to feel that way. I question the remedy offered by the psycho-political prophets, for their politics is an antipolitics that would intensify this feeling rather than lessen it. □

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Richard Hamilton

Nostalgia and History

The distinctive feature of what I'll call here the literary-political mode of analysis is a reliance on personal sensibility, in the literary meaning of that term, as the basic "method" for forming judgments about social and political affairs. Not all literary-politicos are writers of fiction. Some sociologists, political scientists, and culture critics also make use of this subjective method.

As good an introduction as any is provided by a review-essay commenting on Simone de Beauvoir's *The Coming of Age*. This was written by the well-known English critic V. S. Pritchett and appears in the *New York Review of Books* (July 20,1972), a diocesan newspaper for an important branch of the literary-politicos. (Not all writers for the *New York Review*, of course, are literary-politicos.) Pritchett quotes the following from Beauvoir with evident approval:

> The fact that for the last fifteen or twenty years of his life a man should be no more than a reject, a piece of scrap, reveals the failure of our civilization: if we were to look upon the old as human beings, with a human life behind them, and not as so many walking corpses, this obvious truth would move us profoundly.

The passage contains a number of standard features of a world view, the first being the failure-of-our-civilization cliché. Literary-politicos display an almost embarrassing penchant for this kind of condemnation. No matter what the subject, an exultant censure is never far removed. A work is not complete until they have been able to conclude with "the failure of. . . ." It can give one a feeling of great profundity. From a sensitive person one might expect a sensitive reading of the events of this world. A humane intellectual might also be expected to give a "human" reading of those events. But the actual performance is quite different. It is a matter of either success or failure of the entire civilization; there are no in-betweens, no partial or differentiated assessments.

The subject of Beauvoir's book (and of Pritchett's excursus) might well be taken as a sign of at least *some* success for the civilization. In former times people died young; they were swept away by plague and pox, by tuberculosis, malaria, typhoid, and a dozen other major killers. Some people within "our" civilization, however, have made innovations that, to put it simply, save lives. It is these innovations that make "growing old" possible. Orphaned children and fatherless or motherless families were a commonplace in older times. At present, in the economically advanced countries, they are rarities. And most people, liking the idea of long life and complete families, would probably count that as one area of civilization's partial success.

The counterpart to the sweeping condemnation is a championing of "human" virtues by these authors. But their work, curiously, lacks the human dimension. One could point out the more or less obvious facts. Scientists, medical specialists, experts in preventive medicine developed innovations that allowed people to live longer. For the first time in human history large numbers of people survived to old age. That development, in turn, brought attendant problems noted by Beauvoir and others: problems of housing, income, medical care, and, most serious, of meaning for those lives. These

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problems loom very large at present and in many ways the "solutions" to them are failures. But to get a "human" understanding of the situation one might also note that in the ordinary run of events the first solutions to most social problems are likely to be the least adequate ones. In this case, for example, the problem first appeared after the medical innovations of this century. Regrettably, there was little advance thought given to what would follow from the innovations. A more humane line of analysis would provide both an accurate, detailed description of the current state of the problem and a delineation of alternative solutions, so that we might proceed into the immediate future better armed than in the past. But the all-embracing condemnation does not do that.

This style of analysis reifies something called "our civilization," treating all persons in it as if they were fully aware of the dynamics of its operation, as if they were able to influence and direct its course, and as if they had willfully contributed to an obvious inhumane accomplishment. It says that "we" do not look on the old as human beings and instead treat them as "walking corpses." Again, the zeal for condemnation. But how many people in "our civilization" actually behave that way? Most of the people being talked about are fathers and mothers. There are also a few maiden aunts. Now most people, I suspect, treat their fathers and mothers and maiden aunts with solicitude and concern. The idea of treating them as "walking corpses" seems appalling to most people. That is to speak of their attitude. What they are able to *do,* with respect to housing, and care is another matter. Here most people have limited means and hence limited control. Concern is one thing; ability to influence or control events something quite different. That separation, however, is not made by our "sensitive" commentators. For them, the will and the act are one. They acknowledge no possibility of a separation—otherwise the "obvious truth would move us profoundly."

FOR ALL ITS CLAIM of profundity, the statement is actually naive. Its portrait is one of peculiarly undetermined people—there they are, feeling, empathizing, and willing. Human beings sense problems and will solutions; reality adjusts itself accordingly. One might put this fantasy view of the world together with concrete living flesh-and-blood people. A poor working-class family with three or four children and not much space in the flat has a father living off in some nursing home where he is treated like a "walking corpse." He hates it and they hate it. But they also have a simple question for our literary-politico magicians: "what can we do?"

If one were to write a human account, one might include some remarks on the mistakes made in coping with the problem. With each medical improvement there is a predictable consequence—some people will live longer. Recognizing that, one could consider other implications—how will they be housed? how will they be provided with income? how will their new medical needs be met? how will their life be humanized? Perhaps it is a residue of a laissez-faire heritage that few people think out the implications of such an innovation. And when it comes to working out plans and programs, the effort is even rarer. One could put forward this kind of explanation as an object lesson, that it was at some point in the past the fault of a group of intellectuals, with their peculiar traditions and influence. But the literary-politicos, far removed from laissez-faire traditions (or so they say), also make the same kind of noncontribution. They spell out no implications. They provide only the crudest of maps detailing the problem. And the solution? They offer only a sweeping condemnation of current practice.

One might note that the lessons learned from this review of past experience would also apply to the future. There are people working right now on finding cures for heart disease and cancer, the two leading killers in

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economically advanced countries. One of these days, they will find cures. And when that happens the average person will have another 10, 20, or 30 years added on to his or her life. That will happen, beginning perhaps next year, or in five or seven years. And then what shape will the problem take? Will Social Security be able to handle the additional demand? Will the people now condemned to park benches for 10 years of their life have the sentence increased to 25 years?

"The state," Pritchett tells us, "puts the economy first and the economy is directed to maniacal productiveness." This is like a children's book. We have some vague monolith called "the state" and of its own free will (malevolently, of course) it puts the economy first. Now, it is amazing what ordinary people know and what the extraordinary people, like the intellectuals, do not know. An economy generates food, clothing, housing, and superfluities. It does have a peculiar centrality for any human community. There may be certain distortions in priorities: one can drain the economy to build a church or to further culture or, for that matter, to provide for the aged—but when all is said and done, in some rather decisive ways the economy, here, there, now and everywhere, has to be placed first. It would be an extraordinarily reckless "state" that would make any other ordering of priorities.

What one is actually discussing is the *rest* of the priorities, not whether the economy comes first. The literary-politicos might have a serious point about these other priorities, but one would only know it if they were spelling it out. A peculiarity of economic decisions is that every choice is two-edged. When resources are allocated to a given purpose, one is simultaneously denying them to another. It is not sufficient, therefore, to declare that "more money ought to be given for. . . ." A realistic analysis, one that makes an intellectual contribution, would indicate what is going to be sacrificed by the adjustment of priorities. One can always adopt a "devil take the hindmost" position and declare that we should "put more money" into this. But that is simply blinding oneself (and perhaps one's audience) to a later political struggle. After all, one might be taking money from the nonaged poor, from general welfare programs, from housing subsidies, or from food stamp programs. There is no guarantee that money will be taken from some "bad" purpose. Without a realistic specification of the options, the demand is moral but at the same time rather childlike ("I want it . . ."). One would think the task of intellectuals is to make moral *and* intelligent demands.

The established cliché stands in the way of thought, even in the life of the gifted intellectual. In reality part of "the state's" effort consists of doing the opposite of what Pritchett says. Government farm programs in most advanced countries might well be described as involving "maniacal *un*productiveness." Over the years, "unproductiveness" has been built into the common law of the construction trades. The state sat idly by, while hundreds of thousands of redundant man-hours were wasted by so-called firemen in Diesel locomotives. Printers set type that will never be used. Municipal governments display a rich array of featherbedding. It is even rumored there is some dalliance in the executive suites of the nation. Undaunted by the obvious, the summary judgment is nevertheless—"maniacal productiveness."

A related favorite is the "impersonal life we live nowadays." The life "nowadays" is characteristically set in contrast to the wholesome conditions in the days of old (the dates of this Golden Age being rarely specified). In this respect Pritchett is no different.

> We are becoming closer to the nomads, I think, simply because modern economic life forces us to be mobile; we move on from one exhausted hunting ground to another conveniently like it; the family, once the

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> shelter of the old, is scattered. One certain thing primitive life shows: the old are better off in rich societies, but not rich societies like ours, where the wealth depends on each being out for himself.

Pritchett "deduces" that:

> it is the clan or community that is the real educator and the genuine source of a sustaining culture. In so far as it breaks up real communities the new capitalism is anti-human. It standardizes the nomad.

The "we are becoming nomads" claim is still another hoary standby. And "we," humble victims all, are forced onto the road, pawns subject only to the forces of "modern economic life."

It is probably true that there is more movement now than in most of the previous 30 or so centuries. It is almost truistic to say so; agricultural societies do tend to be rather settled. When the overwhelming majority of the population in an economically advanced country moves off the land, as in the last 100 years, there will be a very considerable disruption of social relationships. The uprooting in this century is probably the greatest in the history of the race. That too is almost a truism. Much of "contemporary" social theory was generated in this time of great transition, and, not unexpectedly, it is saturated with the image of helpless, isolated, rootless people.

In this sentimental view, people, ("we" once again) are moved against their will. "We" loved the hearth and the old homestead; it was a sad and bitter day when "we" were forced to leave it. But one element of the picture never appears in this intellectual whimsy. Did "we" love the morning chores? And feeding the horses and hogs? Did we love plowing the fields on those hot and humid days out there in southern Illinois? Just how much community life were we ready for after we had finished work?

Much of this is pure fantasy. It is not even orginal fantasy since for many "creative" writers it amounts to a reworking of someone else's original. Possibly the most ironic feature is that this fantasy is perpetuated by upper-middle-class urban intellectuals who have had little or no contact with the kind of life they idealize. There were and are some people who care very much for the kinds of life idealized in this literature. But the problem arises in the sweep of the claim, its application to the entire human population. Many American farmers in the 19th and 20th centuries were basically land speculators. They would sell and move whenever the opportunity was right. "Roots" and "community" were very low on their scale of values.

Many of the literary-politicos purport to be Marxist in orientation—and at the same time, curiously, they purvey this notion of a prior Golden Age of Community. Marx's position on the subject was very simple. Speaking of the forces of "modern economic life" he stated that at least they had rescued people from the "idiocy of rural life."

And then, what do people do once they arrive in the city? Sit around in an icy state of anomie? The answer provided by most research is unambiguous: no, they do not. Most make the move with the aid of the family and members of the community. Some "pioneers" go first and later they bring younger brothers and fathers and mothers. Studies of the movement of Italians to the United States find that entire communities resettle from the old country, bringing everyone including the undertaker. Many of the moves, in short, do not break ties; they are made with the aid of kin and community linkages.

Nor is it the case that "we" are continuously forced to move. Some do, some do not. Most of those who do are upper-middle-class. But not all of them are on the road either; doctors, lawyers, independent businessmen, and many middle-level managers stay put. Elsewhere in society, particularly in stable working-class areas, rootedness and extended kinship linkages are much more frequent. Intellectuals, on the other hand, are

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different; they probably lead the list for mobility.

If one were to take a community that had passed from 100,000 to 500,000 in a half century, a large proportion would have to say they did not have their roots there, they came from somewhere else. That is the case —a truism again—with any rapidly growing community. But then too, if that community were to stabilize at the latter figure and some 20 or 30 years later one were to ask the same question, the percentage saying they had their roots there would show a considerable increase. It would take a rather unusual set of circumstances to allow any other result (circumstances, say, that would lead the population of Youngstown to exchange places with the population of Akron). This is to suggest that the future is likely to be a period of settlement rather than one of continued or increased movement.

Since most people do not like "anomie" as a condition, they do what they can to avoid it. In their new location they "settle in" and form connections with people like themselves. They may welcome the Welcome Wagon; they may join sociable churches; they may join special interest organizations; they may mix with the neighbors. What they are doing is creating, or in some cases recreating, a community. They are doing exactly what the literary-political intellectuals would counsel, though even that does not satisfy them. Many of them denounce such activities as not "real." It is "pseudocommunity," or more frequently, "pseudo-*Gemeinschaft.*" This position is cultivated within the intellectual subcommunity —though, fortunately, it is a rather rare occasion when one of them meets with the "other people" to let them know that their social life is a fraud.

Some people *are* isolated. Some are that way as a result of quirks of personality. It would be difficult to make any serious case that their isolation results from the dynamics of advanced capitalism. Some, however, are moved about and isolated because their communities have been destroyed through the operations of urban renewal programs. Where new housing replaces the old, that should provide a basis for a longer-lasting community.

A further difficulty with the literary-political romantic tradition is that it selects out the community-disrupting events and overlooks the less visible or dramatic community-forming events. In such accounts only one process occurs. But if that were really the case, society should have fallen apart some time ago. Some writers do in fact believe that this falling apart is just around the corner. They have deluded themselves with their own highly selective presentations thus contributing to their own alienation.

Just another note on the urban renewal question. Literary-politicos present themselves as radical critics of the society. In the face of urban renewal, however, they sometimes prove to be intrepid reactionaries. Their thrust comes to seem toward maintaining what is typically the oldest and most dilapidated housing in the metropolis. There can be no question that in practice urban renewal has had many deleterious consequences; communities destroyed, people relocated and forced into more expensive housing.

One alternative would be to work out a plan that would allow one to get better housing while at the same time maintaining the community and, if possible, holding down costs. But the kinds of intellectuals I am discussing do not do that. Instead, they make a blanket condemnation of urban power structures. By doing so they restrict the choice available to those affected by the renewal to one of the developer's plan vs. the status quo.

Note the final comment in the last quotation from Pritchett: "It standardizes the nomad." Here we are, talking about hundreds of thousands of human beings with diverse wants and interests. Our sensitive intellectual sums them all up with a capsule term—"the nomad." It should also be noted

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that there is an unquestioned judgment made here—that the life of "the sedentary" is certainly to be preferred to that of "the nomad."

THE LITERARY-POLITICAL STYLE, in summary, has the following characteristics: Simplistic, all-or-nothing, condemnatory attitudizining. A very simplistic account of the dynamics of social change. A highly simplistic account of "the state" and an equally simplistic account of its role vis-à-vis "the economy." A highly simplified theory of history that allows an unfavorable contrast between some past Golden Age and a sadly deficient present. A refusal to undertake a detailed analysis of societal problems and a refusal to work out plans for amelioration of the human condition or strategies for implementing plans.

It might be amusing if it were not so tragic. If the insensitivity were a private matter without consquences for other groups, one might simply let it pass. But, regrettably, some people do pay attention to this kind of thing. Some decision-makers feel that such eminent intellectuals must be right and so they are moved to bend their policies accordingly. As a consequence, considerable amounts of human effort are turned in peculiarly backward direction. In an era of "expanding educational opportunities," where there is ever more "liberal arts" education, thousands of students, some with zeal, some with reluctance, take up these notions. Since most of them are from the upper middle classes (other groups in the population being too close to the realities of life to be moved by such fancies), they have an influence disproportionate to their numbers. Given the negative and/or backward-looking character of the literary-political world view, these students do not acquire knowledge that allows them to understand the present, let alone the change in it. Their "education" consists of learning the grounds for rejection of the contemporary world—in its "totality."

For the rest of the population—for those who have to live in the contemporary world, for those whose work makes that world possible, for those who have not been granted the benefits of leisure and luxury which allow the development of such fancies, for those who make the life of the literary-politicos possible and might in turn anticipate something worthwhile in return—they get nothing.

There is a disjunction between Pritchett's observations in the essay from which I have quoted and those in his novels, literary criticism and autobiographical volumes. The explanation is rather simple; it goes back to problems of "method." In his autobiography Pritchett writes of his own personal experience, events he has experienced directly. And there his sensitivity and intelligence come through for all to appreciate.

He describes his method as "the free mingling of fact and imagination." Where that mingling is based on fact it proves very instructive. Pritchett differs from most intellectuals, who have upper- or upper-middle-class backgrounds, in that he comes from the lower middle class. That is to say, he has had direct experience with what for intellectuals is an "unusual" range of fact. And in discussing this class he sharply rejects the standard literary-political claim; he inserts a parenthesis noting that "the standard view that it is inevitably Fascist is crude and untrue."

The problem with the literary-political method is that it depends on highly personal judgment and on faith. Where one does not have a fact in one's own experience and is not inclined to undertake the onerous research necessary to establish it, the inclination will be to "fill in" with a quick substitute. The handed-down notions in intellectual circles certainly sound like the coin of the realm. After all, everybody one knows vouches for them. But the common consent of mankind or even of a specially knowledgeable segment of mankind is no substitute for investigation. Without the latter one may simply be "filling in" with school verities. □

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Norman Gall

Chile: The Struggle in the Copper Mines

Chile is now the owner of its mines, and the workers must know that copper is the wage of Chile, its principal wealth. Copper earns 83 percent of Chile's foreign exchange income. Of Chile's total exports of $1.15 billion, copper produces $800 million, and provides 25 percent of the government budget. So copper is fundamental.—*President Salvador Allende, speech to the workers at the Chuquicamata copper mine, October 1971*

Chuquicamata, the world's largest and richest open-pit copper mine, forms an enclave 10,000 feet high in the Atacama desert of northern Chile. Chuqui alone earns one-third of Chile's desperately needed foreign exchange income each year. The pit forms a gray-green elliptical amphitheater, two miles long and one mile wide, graded down toward its ever-deepening bottom by terraced benches 100 feet wide, blasted into existence over the past half-century by dynamite explosions and excavations that have removed 1.2 billion tons of material. The labor of creating Chuquicamata in the beginning depended heavily on burros and Bolivian highland Indians who lived in caves they themselves had dug in the surrounding hillsides; today the prodigious task of moving ore and rock out of the mine is performed with huge machines, 100-ton trucks and shovels with a bite of 13 cubic yards, whose movements have been carefully programmed to create economies of scale and reduce the risk of human failure.

An asphalt road leads to the great mine, from the Pacific Coast port of Antofagasta through the reddish desert and past the ghost towns of abandoned nitrate *oficinas* which, a half-century after the collapse of Chile's nitrate boom, look like archeological relics caked with sand. This whole mineral-rich coastal desert was wrested by Chile from Bolivia in the War of the Pacific (1879–84), which converted Chile from an agricultural republic into a leading supplier of nitrates and copper to the world's industrializing economies. Although the surface outcroppings of Chuquicamata's copper had been continuously exploited since pre-Colombian times, it was not until the Guggenheim interests brought in steamshovels from the Panama Canal to dig the huge pit that Chuquicamata was launched into its spectacular career as a contributor to U.S. corporate balance sheets. When the Guggenheims sold 51 percent of Chuquicamata in 1923 for $77 million, it was then the biggest cash deal in Wall Street history. Although Anaconda made a net investment of only $93 million between 1930 and 1965 in its two Chile operations—Chuqui and the smaller El Salvador-Potrerillos mine—Chuquicamata alone generated $810 million in profits in the quarter-century from 1945 to 1969, with 60 percent of these earnings coming in the 1959–69 period. In 1967, as the Vietnam war pushed world demand and prices for copper to unprecedent heights, Anaconda's Chilean operations accounted

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for $4.05 of the company's total earnings per share of $4.31. After the newly installed Marxist regime of President Salvador Allende in 1971 quickly consummated the nationalization of the big foreign copper companies, Anaconda President John B. M. Place said: "The confiscation of Anaconda's Chilean properties was a rough blow that took away two-thirds of our copper production and three-fourths of our earnings."

Until recently Chuquicamata had been a carefully structured American-style community of 30,000 persons, with power residing in the "American Camp" on a hill occupied by the company-owned houses of the 450-odd Americans and Chileans on what was known as the "gold roll": those professional and technical contract employees who earned their salaries in dollars. Today, however, it is a community in crisis, a "sick giant" as President Allende described it on July 11, 1971, the day nationalization was formally proclaimed. When I visited Chuquicamata for 10 days in February 1972, it was clear that the old hierarchical structure was swept away but that no working order or consensus had been created to replace it.

Nationalization of Chile's Big Copper was the result of a movement gathering strength throughout the postwar period and embracing conservative business leaders as well as Marxist and Christian Democratic politicians. During these years, the big American copper companies in Chile—Anaconda and Kennecott—had developed an experienced staff of Chilean mining engineers, geologists, and other supervisory personnel who, it was widely viewed, could be expected to run the mines if and when they were nationalized. Outright nationalization followed hard upon the "Chileanization" program of Christian Democratic President Eduardo Frei (1964–70), which increased Chilean state financial participation in the copper industry while inducing the foreign companies to make major new investments in order to double Big Copper's production capacity by 1972. But instead of buying political stability for the companies, the "Chileanization" deals of the mid-1960s and the high copper prices and corporate profits of the Vietnam war period merely fueled the pressures for nationalization. By 1969 President Frei had announced a "pacted nationalization" of Anaconda's properties providing for 51 percent government ownership immediately and the right to purchase the remaining stock after 1972. Indeed, most of the battle over nationalization was decided *before* Salvador Allende, the candidate of the Unidad Popular coalition headed by the Communists and Socialists, won his narrow 1970 election victory —with only 36 percent of the vote and a 1.4 percent plurality. By 1970 the Chilean treasury was receiving 84 percent of Big Copper's profits in the form of taxes and stock dividends.

Nationalization of Big Copper was completed in the months following Allende's inauguration. By July 1971, all parties in the Chilean Congress joined in supporting a government-proposed constitutional amendment empowering Allende retroactively to deduct all excess profits above 10 percent of book value since 1955 from the compensation to be paid Anaconda and Kennecott. Acting on a controller-general's financial assessment, Allende two months later decreed $774 million in penalties against the two copper companies for excess profits and alleged defects in their expansion programs. Because these penalties were greater than the book value of the mines, the government claimed that it owed the companies no indemnization.

This consensus on the nationalization of Big Copper represented much more than the euphoria of a newly installed leftist government. It reflected growing hostility of leading conservative businessmen and politicians toward Anaconda and Kennecott, especially after the companies' failure to plow more money into a Chilean expansion, even after generous incentives were granted them

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under the 1955 "New Deal" (*Nuevo Trato*) copper legislation. Indeed, while Kennecott was taking advantage of the tax and foreign exchange concessions enacted under the "New Deal" to extract profits averaging 37.9 percent yearly in the 1955–60 period from its El Teniente mine, it nevertheless spent $100 million on building a huge refinery to process Chilean copper in Maryland instead of in Chile itself.

With the Alliance for Progress, the fate of the copper companies was placed on the same legislative trading block as the Christian Democrats' agrarian reform program, which had threatened conservative interests. In 1969 the conservative National party President Sergio Onofre Jarpa acidly remarked: "The United States told us to have an agrarian reform with a 30-year term of payment. I think that we ought to apply the same system to the *Gran Mineria* [Anaconda and Kennecott], and I am sure that the United States won't object." As early as 1961 leading conservative Senator Francisco Bulnes voiced the growing bitterness about the copper companies in the right-wing newspaper, *El Diario Ilustrado:*

> There is no need for social change in Chile, since the country has had many social laws on the books for over 50 years. It would be better if the United States quit stirring up economic and social problems. . . . What the country does need is large new investments in copper production. The *Nuevo Trato* has been a failure—merely the granting of exaggerated concessions to the companies in return for almost nothing. Therefore, if the companies cannot be made to launch a huge new program and let the proceeds flow to develop Chile as the Alliance envisions, the government should nationalize them.

ALL THROUGH the postwar years the word *dependencia* gained currency as an expression of economic nationalism, but at Chuquicamata it took on a special meaning. Every day the American manager of Chuquicamata spoke by shortwave radio with Anaconda's headquarters in New York to report on the day's production. The New York office did Chuqui's accounting as well as its research and development, planning, budgeting, sales, purchasing of about $20 million worth of spare parts annually, and the design of the new equipment for the expansion program that was to be completed in 1971. If a piece of major equipment broke down and could not be immediately repaired, Chuqui's managers were on the radio to New York for instructions. If this failed to produce satisfactory results, a technician was flown to Chile from the U.S. Apart from this support, Chuqui was a privileged community. Its workers were among the best-paid in Chile; its 450 supervisors lived in free company housing and earned their salaries in dollars (which gave them substantial advantages on the black market).

The trepidation with which this privileged and isolated community received the news of nationalization was understandable. When President Frei went to Chuqui in July 1969 to explain the "pacted nationalization" agreement with Anaconda, he tried to calm such fears:

> Many people play a strange role. In Santiago they demand of me an immediate and violent nationalization. And here, among the workers, they say: "What is going to happen to you now? Now the state is going to take over. We are all going to become public employees. Our wonderful company hospital will become part of the National Health Service. They are going to take away our indemnization for years of service, and all our guarantees."

Frei's failure to relieve the Chuquicamata community's fears showed in the local results of the 1970 election, which conservative ex-President Alessandri—always a friend of the copper companies—won in this traditionally leftist community because he was the only candidate to take a clear stand against further nationalization.

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The workers of Chuquicamata were privileged in yet another important sense: they have a very powerful union able to paralyze production and inflict great damage on Chile's economy. In wildcat strikes the workers would simply withdraw to their lunchrooms and refuse to talk with their supervisors until union leaders and management representatives appeared. "These 'partial stoppages' became increasingly frequent during the 1960s because the price of copper was very high and it was unthinkable to let all production stop because of a petty conflict over work rules," one veteran supervisor told me. "The government in Santiago exerted pressure on the company to settle these problems quickly so there would be no loss in tax revenues." And a young Communist mining engineer, a pillar of the present management, explained to me:

> The beginnings of the labor movement at Chuqui were very difficult. Between 1948 and 1952, after the outlawing of the Communist party, some 2,000 workers—many of them union activists—were fired from Chuqui, charged with being Communists. Still, the labor movement gained strength steadily during the 1950s, especially after all the unions in the copper industry joined in 1956 to form the Copper Workers' Confederation under Communist and Socialist leadership. During the 1960s, with rising copper prices and increasing political conflict over the future of Big Copper, the *sindicato* was transformed from a defensive into an offensive weapon.

However, despite the leftist leadership, the privileged and isolated position of the copper workers has led them to focus on bread-and-butter issues rather than on the political goals of their leaders. When nationalization came, fear of losing their privileged status within the Chilean working class was their first concern. When the workers of Chuqui went on strike for a 70 percent wage increase a few weeks after the 1970 election, President-elect Allende denounced them as "a labor aristocracy." In return, the workers' fear about the future was translated into expressions of distrust of the relatively inexperienced newcomers who replaced the departed Anaconda technicians. "We don't know where these people are taking us," they told me again and again. "They don't know what they're doing and things are in a mess. We're the ones who should be teaching and giving orders to them."

The effects of the decline in industrial discipline—both before and after nationalization—were vividly described by President Allende in a blunt speech to the Chuquicamata workers a year after his election:

> Within one month in the sulfide concentrating plant five mill-supports have been burned out; one recently imported motor was burned out for lack of oiling, and a new locomotive was destroyed on its first day of operation because a rail was left out of place [sic]. Besides this, there is theft, *compañeros.* Yesterday a truck driver was arrested who was carrying copper bars with other things inside some barrels. . . . *Compañeros,* last year [1970] after the union contract was signed, we lost $36 million worth of production because of wildcat stoppages that lasted hours or days in different sections. This year we have lost 12,000 tons of production for the same reason, at a cost of $12 million. . . . So there are vices that must end, *compañeros,* inherited vices such as the loss of production time in the smelters, 30 minutes at the end of each shift and 15 minutes at the start, 45 minutes in all. . . .Then there is the question of overtime for repair work that is inherited from the old days. For example, it is necessary sometimes to pay 60 days' wages for a job that takes 20 days. . . .

II

During my visit to Chuquicamata I had a long talk with David Silberman, the new Communist manager, who soon after his appointment had become a central figure in the struggle for control of the mine between the union leadership and the Communist party cadres assigned to executive positions. A high-strung engineer in his mid-

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thirties who had spent nearly all his professional career at government desk jobs in Santiago, Silberman is one of several Communists and Socialists named by Allende to key posts in Big Copper without any previous experience in the industry.

> There are few people who both know about copper and have the government's confidence [he told me]. The problems in the mines are mainly political and social. Our technicians don't seem to have the interest or capacity for solving political and social problems, and don't seem aware of what's happening in Chile today. The Americans have left Chuqui, but their influence has remained in the way the technicians and professionals live. . . .
>
> I admit that the government has committed serious errors at Chuqui [Silberman continued]. First, the general management of the company in Santiago was in the hands of people who called themselves technicians but were neither technicians nor politicians. Second, many people came here as political appointees with big salaries, which offended a lot of people. In one year some recent graduates have risen from junior engineers' jobs to section chiefs. Many technical problems in the past were solved by Anaconda flying down engineers from the U.S. for three days or a week, but this practice has left no benefit for us. Now we must solve these problems for ourselves. Besides, the Anaconda era has left behind many labor vices. For example, the workers refuse to do a full day's work, yet are always pushing and maneuvering to be assigned overtime.
>
> This week, when the conveyor belt that brings concentrates into the smelter broke down, the workers asked for 40 hours' pay to do a job that took them less than six hours to do. The workers don't want to go to political meetings because they lose overtime. Recently we have seen a clash between workers and bosses, involving some political parties and a struggle for power at the mine. The rightist enemies of the Unidad Popular have chosen Chuqui as one of their principal themes, because there are problems they can exploit politically.

When I came to Chuquicamata, the mine was in crisis operationally because it had been nationalized just as a major expansion program was being completed—which is usually a problem-ridden stage in the life of any enterprise. This crisis was exacerbated by the departure of nearly half the 466 supervisors working at the mine at the time of Allende's election. Of these, 40 were fired after an abortive supervisors' strike in August. Copper production at Chuqui for the first six months of 1972 was running at 23 percent below the average for the corresponding six months of the previous three years, while world copper prices had declined proportionately even further below the levels of the 1967–71 period. The supervisors who left the mine were replaced either by less experienced subordinates or by other technicians, many of them recent graduates, from outside. Moreover, the payroll was swollen by swarms of new nontechnical personnel, such as sociologists, psychologists, and public relations men, who soon plunged into political work in behalf of the Unidad Popular or into infantile rivalries among themselves.

The operational crisis and rivalries among the political appointees representing the six Unidad Popular parties became interlaced with the power struggle between the union leaders and the new political appointees who held key management positions. A few days before my arrival at Chuqui the respected production manager, Andrés Zausquevich, resigned in protest against "several tendencies within the Unidad Popular fighting for maximum control of activities at the mine. . . . My resignation is a consequence of attitudes and actions of certain personages, high-ranking executives in some cases, who fly their own flags and interpret government policy in their own way."

The *sindicato* at Chuquicamata is controlled by a group of dissident Socialists, the Unión Socialist Popular (USOPO), which had been the most anti-Communist faction of Chile's Socialist party until it

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left the party altogether in 1969.[1] The USOPO party expresses support for the Unidad Popular coalition without formally belonging to it. However, its criticism of government mining operations—especially at its Chuqui stronghold—has appeared often in the conservative press. The USOPO union leaders and the Communist managers at Chuqui had been jockeying for position for months. But the eventual major confrontation came about almost by chance—over the fate of smelter work-gang *capataz* (foreman) Juan Titichoca, whose apparent negligence resulted in a bizarre industrial accident that polarized the struggle for power at the mine. USOPO lawyers later explained to me: "Titichoca was a pawn. His case was a pretext to begin the fight between the Communist management and the USOPO union leaders to see who was boss at Chuquicamata."

JUAN TITICHOCA, a husky, round-faced man in his late thirties with the surname and the physical appearance of a Bolivian highland Indian, was assigned to the smelter several years ago. Under the union's strict seniority rules he rose to assistant *capataz* with responsibility for Converter No. 4, one of the huge cylindrical ovens into which molten copper is poured for its final stage of heat purification.

The main smelter at Chuquicamata is housed in a high, cathedrallike shed with light streaming in from the far end; the giant vats move back and forth on stationary cranes above the smelter floor to receive the molten copper poured in glowing bursts of light and heat from the rotating maws of the converters. The smelter floor is strewn with slag and discarded machinery. The slag is recovered by bulldozers that crawl over the floor, driven by sweating men wearing industrial helmets and masks to protect them from the fumes. The other work crews are found along the catwalks behind the converters, often sleeping or reading newspapers, sometimes walking over to the railing of the catwalk to peer into the converter to see how the copper is "cooking." Once in a while, often at the prodding of the supervisors, they would don asbestos suits and masks and gloves to perform the unpleasant task of poking steel rods into the tubing of the converters to clean them and send more air into the molten bath. To avoid performing this stoking operation, the converter crews have taken to tilting the mouth of the converters at an extreme angle, so air will enter the bath without stoking; but this raises the danger that molten copper will burn through the wall of the converter near the lip. This practice has caused constant bickering between the workers and their supervisors, as has the custom of the converter crews walking off their jobs a half-hour before the end of each shift—leaving the converters unattended.

At 7:30 A.M. on the morning of December 8, 1971, the *capataz* Juan Titichoca left his job on the night shift, as usual, a half-hour ahead of schedule, leaving his Converter No. 4 cooking at a very high temperature and tilted at a dangerous angle. When the next work crew arrived at 8 A.M., the men found that the molten copper had burned a hole about the size of a Volkswagen in the wall of the converter and had spilled onto the smelter floor. This was the third major accident in the smelter within a month. The Chuquicamata management immediately suspended Titichoca and conducted a formal inquiry, required by law before any worker could be fired.

Titichoca's dismissal had been delayed because the union and management were engaged in delicate negotiations for a new contract. These negotiations lasted throughout December 1971, and by the time they were concluded the political climate at Chuquicamata had been profoundly disturbed by Zausquevich's dramatic resigna-

[1] In the 1970 union elections, five USOPO representatives were chosen for the union's executive committee, compared with two Christian Democrats and one seat each for the Communists and Socialists, plus one Independent.

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tion. Also, a tendentious but penetrating three-part "Inside Chuquicamata" series had appeared in *El Mercurio* of Santiago, the leading opposition newspaper, that made detailed accusations of mismanagement and political meddling on the part of the new executives, concluding with the prediction that, "undoubtedly, the Communist party will control Chuquicamata in a very short time." The appointment of Silberman, a Communist, as the new general manager of Chuqui was the signal for the all-out political struggle to begin. Whereas the union previously had acquiesced to the firing of Titichoca, his name suddenly became the watchword for the defense of labor's rights. The union pushed the matter into a wildcat strike that shut down the smelter for four days, costing Chile about $4 million. In a radio speech during the strike, Silberman threatened to prosecute the union leaders for subversion under the State Internal Security Law. When the smelter workers suddenly walked off the job, they refused to empty the molten copper then cooking in the converters; if three supervisors and a worker had not stepped in to empty the converters and the copper had been allowed to solidify inside, major damage would have resulted. Yet, under pressure from Santiago, the new management gave in to the union's demand for Titichoca's reinstatement and the wildcat strike ended. A union delegation then traveled to Santiago to present a bill of complaints to President Allende. When Allende refused to see them, the 5,000-word document was leaked to *El Mercurio,* featuring the union leaders' contention that "the sectarianism at the mine, the bitter struggle among some parties to obtain this or that post, the denial of recognition to our union for effective participation of the workers will produce chaos. . . ."

The test of strength over Titichoca revealed not only the degree to which political rivalry had affected the functioning of Chuquicamata, but also how thin was the line of continuity in the mine. Beyond this, it showed the workers' essentially conservative interest in their jobs, and the ease with which they could hold hostage the Chilean economy. Apart from these conflicts, the mine was kept under stress by two problems: maintenance and replacing the 130,000 spare parts kept in stock at Chuqui's warehouses, and solving the difficulties arising from a nationalization undertaken before the $150 million expansion program could be completed. The expansion was to increase Chuqui's smelting capacity by half to about 1,200 tons of copper daily, but instead of rising, production had declined in 1972 from the previous level of 800 tons daily to about 500 tons at the time of my visit. Because of mechanical breakdowns in the smelter, ore concentrates that normally would be processed at Chuqui were being shipped in rented trucks to other smelters hundreds of miles further south along the coast, which greatly increased production costs.

Silberman told me that "only 17 of our 35 Lectra-Haul trucks are working now because of operational problems." These giant vehicles, with a 100-ton capacity, were purchased by Anaconda at a cost of $263,000 each and are the mainstay of the extraction from the great pit at the rate of 90,000 tons of ore and 55,000 tons of waste material a day. Careful maintenance of the trucks is indispensable for making Chuquicamata's enormous investment in mine machinery—including 17 electric excavating shovels that cost $1.2 million each—an economically rational operation. Replacement parts for the huge trucks are very expensive. A new diesel-electric motor costs $30,000. A single Lectra-Haul tire stands eight feet high and has a landed cost in Chile of $4,000.

When I visted Chuqui, the expropriated copper companies cast doubt on the possibility of regularly getting spare parts in the U.S. by obtaining a federal court order freezing all Chilean government bank accounts because of Chile's failure to pay creditors' notes that had fallen due from Frei's "Chileanization" agreements. Mean-

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while, rush orders for cheaper Japanese copies of the Lectra-Haul tires, 250 of them, had been placed and the first shipments were being flown to Chile from Japan. Such improvisations, however, do little to relieve the overall dependence of great mines like Chuquicamata on U.S. suppliers. Dependence on U.S. technology has been a much greater factor in the nationalization of the Chilean copper industry than, say, in Fidel Castro's nationalization of the Cuban sugar industry in 1959–60, since the newest Cuban sugar mill had been built in 1927. The capital investment and complexity of industrial installations in Chilean copper also is immeasurably greater than that in Cuba's old sugar mills.

A key maintenance supervisor told me:

> Every week there are two or three crashes of our vehicles. In the few months that I've been here, 15 trucks have been scrapped because of crashes, and another eight are idle because of a lack of spare parts. The Americans didn't give cars to any damn fool without a license, so there weren't the kind of stupid crackups there are now. Our worst spare parts problem is tires, big ones and little ones. They're supposed to be manufactured here in Chile, but the big tire factory in Santiago has just been taken over by the government and they haven't been able to import rubber because of dollar shortage.

Sergio Cuevas, Chuqui's new supply and maintenance manager, told me:

> We are fighting for more autonomy here in Chuqui so we won't have to depend on the bureaucracy in Santiago for all we need. We will have problems, but we will solve them. The freezing of our New York bank accounts lasted only a few days, and this kind of thing does not prevent us from buying in the U.S. If we can't get spare parts in the U.S., we'll go elsewhere. Switching to another supplier may mean a decline in production. Yet we know that Chile has taken a great step in nationalization, and we must produce copper—one way or another—because there is nothing else we can do to survive. These problems are the price we must pay.

III

When President Frei went to Chuquicamata in July 1969, he explained why he had opted for a "pacted nationalization"—as opposed to the "violent nationalization" urged upon him by his Marxist opposition. Frei said that his main reason for favoring "pacted nationalization" was "not to disturb what we were doing: so the work to bring into production the new Exótica mine would continue, and also the expansion program at El Teniente."

The $563 million expansion program was scheduled to double Chile's Big Copper production from around 600,000 tons per year to more than 1.2 million tons by 1972. With the work on these projects still uncompleted when Allende took office, the "violent nationalization" of Big Copper by the new government left Chile in a vulnerable position. However, after 20 years of preaching nationalization, Allende gave these economic considerations a low priority. Chile's vulnerability soon became apparent.

The new Exótica mine went into production shortly before Allende's election, but there promptly arose serious metallurgical problems. It was impossible to process Exótica's copper under any known formula because it is contained in what is known as a fractured ore body, in which there are great differences in the composition of the material between one part of the deposit and another. As a result, the extraction of ore from Exótica has been suspended.

Recently, Exótica's heavy trucks and machinery were moved to Chuquicamata to remove a large accumulation of waste material covering the ore body that had caused a major landslide three years ago. At this writing, the investment of $44 million in the opening of Exótica, which involved large expenditures for equipment, installations, and the removal of 100 million tons of sterile earth and rock to get at the main ore body, has produced no benefit for the Chilean economy, whereas its scheduled production was to have meant a 20 percent

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increase in its copper output. A contract for development of an industrial process for treatment of Exótica's ores has been given to the Power Gas Co. of England, which has just built a miniature pilot plant in England that processes the ore in liquid solution at the rate of one gallon per minute; technicians at Exótica doubt whether this process could be mounted on site to treat Exótica's ores on an industrial scale within the next three years.

It is impossible for a layman to determine whether this major setback for Chile's copper industry was anticipated by Anaconda in the years before nationalization. Was this failure a result of the company's negligence? Did Anaconda have untested formulas for the solution of this problem? The Exótica affair is evidence of Chile's continuing dependence on the world's technological centers, and of the consequences of plunging into nationalizing major industries without first finding solutions to such major problems. As Theodore H. Moran wrote in his penetrating study of Chilean copper: "The trick for the nationalist is to take as full advantage of the foreign corporations as he can while they are within his range, and not to push them out before he has learned or can learn to duplicate their feats on the international as well as national scene." [2]

An even graver problem occurred in the "violent nationalization" of El Teniente, the world's largest underground metal mine, in which the Frei government had acquired a 51 percent interest from Kennecott a few years before. At the time government representatives were sent to take control of El Teniente, a $247 million expansion program was being completed to increase production from 180,000 to 280,000 tons of copper per year. The basic principle behind this increase in smelting capacity was a pioneering oxygen-injection process by which cold concentrates could be fed directly into the cylindrical converters without passing first through the reverberatory furnaces, which represented a large saving in both smelting time and operating costs. Several Chilean technicians from the El Teniente smelter were sent to the U.S. to be trained in the new process, including one engineer who spent 20 months there helping to develop a system of computer control of the mixture of oxygen, concentrates, and molten copper inside the converters. Today the new computer console, still unused, gathers dust in a corner of the El Teniente smelter. Production at the smelter in 1971 declined by nearly 20 percent instead of increasing by the 55 percent envisioned in the expansion plan. The Chilean technicians trained to bring this new process into production have all left to work in other countries—some say they were invited to leave by Communist and Socialist union leaders; others say they were lured to new jobs abroad by Kennecott.

IN THE BATTLE over the nationalization of Big Copper, it soon became apparent that the two sides were fighting with different weapons. The weapons used by the Chilean nationalists were almost wholly political, while those of Anaconda and Kennecott were mainly technological. It also became clear that, while Chile had lived off the copper industry in world trade for most of this century, few Chileans were sufficiently experienced to run the industry, and even fewer had any experience in the intricacies of overseas trade.

Internationally, Big Copper until recently was an "integrated industry" in which 10 big corporations controlled 75 percent of the West's production in 1967. The power of this oligopoly has been sharply curtailed by the copper nationalizations over the past few years in Chile, Zambia, and the Congo, and the threat of it in Peru. These nations generate three-fourths of the world copper trade and have joined in CIPEC (Inter-

[2] From Theodore H. Moran, "The Multinational Corporation and the Politics of Development: The Case of Copper in Chile, 1945–70" (Doctoral thesis, Government Department, Harvard University).

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governmental Council of Copper-Exporting Countries), a thus-far unsuccessful effort to coordinate prices and production. Discussing the impact of these developments on the world copper industry, Moran concludes:

> Economic nationalism hurt the multinational copper companies not only in the loss of revenues from the mines. The companies have been hurt more by the challenge to their position, or to their very existence, as viable integrated corporations. Without the necessity of alleging either malice or conspiracy, it is evident that the large copper companies are acting to the extent of their powers to protect themselves. The large multinational corporations are by no means all-powerful. But they still have the ability perhaps—depending upon the pricing and marketing strategies of the new nationalistic "independent" producers in the CIPEC countries—of eroding the position of the governments that have nationalized their former operations, if not undermining the position of those governments in the international industry entirely. There is nothing in history or logic to suggest that the major producers or fabricators or consumers will stand still and have the terms and prices of production dictated to them by outsiders. The nationalists may currently prize their "independence" precisely because they believe, on the basis of the great copper shortage during the Vietnam War, that they have achieved this dictatorial bliss. Most corporate boards of directors have no such future in mind. . . . More properly, the argument should be put that the large industrial countries need secured sources of raw materials so badly that they will pay the price of neutralizing economic nationalists who threaten to upset the old and dependable system.[3]

Moran argues that Chile nationalized its Big Copper just at the time when scarcity was being replaced by abundance in the world copper market as a result of a return to normal from the extraordinary demand of the Vietnam war years and the opening of new mines in the early 1970s by the multinational corporations in such "safer" areas as Canada, Australia, Iran, New Guinea, and Mexico. Indeed, the downward pressure on prices would be much greater than it is today if Chile were not going through its present postnationalization production difficulties, and if Zambia—which together with Chile produces half the world's export copper—were not still suffering the consequences of a disastrous cave-in in 1970.

The monopolization of new copper technology by the metropolitan corporate establishment, coupled with recent trends in the world copper market, has amplified the effects of the political and production difficulties at Chuquicamata. These difficulties, unfortunately, have undermined the potential advantages of socialism, which in a country like Chile is not state ownership as an end in itself, but the rationalization of production and distribution of limited resources. But this rationality is impaired when both the production and the terms of trade of Chilean copper are harmed by rash political acts, the consequences of which could easily have been foreseen. It probably would have cost Chile much less in the long run if an agreement had been reached with the copper companies for indemnization pegged to the completion of the expansion programs at Chuqui and El Teniente and the production increases planned when these investments were undertaken.

While Anaconda was caught virtually defenseless by Allende's "violent nationalization"—it had financed the $150 million Chuqui-Exótica expansion program and then had allowed its U.S. government expropriation insurance to lapse—Kennecott had been much more astute in protecting itself against political uncertainties. In its offer to the Frei regime to sell 51 percent of El Teniente under the "Chileanization" program, Kennecott remained as manager and 49 percent owner of a company worth four times as much in book value as before "Chileanization" and producing 64 percent more than before, while its tax rates were

[3] *Ibid.*

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halved. Moreover, not one cent of new Kennecott money went into the $247 million expansion plan at El Teniente. The expansion was financed by the $80 million paid by Chile for its share in El Teniente and a $110 million loan from the U.S. Export-Import Bank. Repayment of this $190 million total was guaranteed by both the Chilean and U.S. governments in case of expropriation. Another $45 million was raised by long-term future sales of copper to banks and manufacturers in Europe and Japan. "The aim of these arrangements," said Robert Haldeman, head of Kennecott's Chilean operations, "is to insure that nobody expropriates Kennecott without upsetting relations to customers, creditors, and governments on three continents."

Chilean nationalists long have been mystified and infuriated by this kind of corporate manipulation, and it was this fury that perhaps made nationalization inevitable. Although, for example, there were only five Americans among the roughly 600 supervisors working at El Teniente at the time of Allende's election and there was widespread belief in the capacity of Chilean technicians to run the mining and smelting operations, production at Chile's two biggest mines soon declined because of political trouble.

The nationalization was carried out in such a way as to virtually ensure disturbance of the flow of badly needed supplies and technology into the copper industry. One hopes the present difficulties are temporary. Nevertheless, Big Copper in Chile is confronted today with the specter of the nationalized tin mines in neighboring Bolivia, where production declined by one-half after nationalization in 1952 and effective control of the mines fell into the hands of the leftists miners' *sindicatos* until, in 1965, the army was sent into the mines to break up the unions and install a repressive managerial regime of the state mining corporation. The tragedy of the Allende regime, however, is that the political and production difficulties at Chuqui and El Teniente can be projected on a much larger screen. The state sector of the economy has expanded enormously since Allende came to power, but the operation of the newly seized and/or expropriated farms and factories has been paralyzed by political rivalries—like those in Big Copper—among the Marxist parties of the Unidad Popular, whose managers have little experience in production and have relegated economic considerations to a secondary level. For these reasons Chile today is experiencing its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

The lesson of Chuquicamata can be extracted from the recurrent conflicts between political and economic priorities since nationalization. When I suggested to a key Communist manager at the mine that the Unidad Popular regime might well concentrate on consolidating the transition to state ownership before plunging into the difficult task of political conversion of Chuqui's suspicious and recalcitrant workers, he replied: "Do you think the Communist party would ever send its cadres here without their getting involved in politics?" Of course not. But it is a measure of the weakness of this government elected in 1970 with the support of barely one-third of the Chilean voters, and of the competitive friction between the six parties composing the Unidad Popular coalition, that it has devoted more energy to small-time political jockeying than to maintaining intact Chile's most important industrial organization or to minimizing the transitional shock of nationalization.

While it is very common for large industrial enterprises to suffer production declines in the first months or years following nationalization, these declines can usually be overcome if self-destructive policies are not blindly pursued. At stake is not only Chile's largest economic enterprise and its capacity to earn dollars on the world market, but also whether Salvador Allende's coalition possesses enough realism, toughness, and discipline to survive. □

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George Eckstein

The New Black Theater

At a time when the American theater has been suffering from aesthetic sclerosis, the new black theater has shown considerable signs of vitality—so far, it is probably the most promising segment of the much-advertised black cultural renaissance. New playwrights, new productions, new companies have appeared in the black theater, all meriting respectful though not uncritical attention.

A white spectator at the black theater faces obvious pitfalls: he is apt to miss some of the finer points, to be turned off by insults, or to lean over backward in the wish to be fair toward a groping art. But does this justify the indifference one detects among white liberals and radicals? One reason for such "benign neglect" is, of course, the fact that the new black theater does not address itself primarily to whites. It is expressly written for a black audience, in a black idiom, and frequently has shocking things to say about whites—and Jews in particular. Even where it does not want to be a mere "political weapon," it aims at "raising black consciousness."

The success of the preceding phase of the Negro movement in the early 1960s, aimed at individual equality and a greatly expanded access to education, together with the nationalist impetus of Black Power, have for the first time created a substantial black audience for the theater. To survive, this new black theater depends on subsidies from the white establishment—foundations, corporations, and government. One of its most painful problems is that it must feed from the hand the biting of which is a major reason for its existence. This contradiction is, of course, not limited to the cultural sphere.

So far, the integrationist outlook has not produced anything substantial in dramatic art. Black theater has received its major impulses from the black cultural revolution and from the dramatic quality of confrontation politics. As Robert Macbeth, director of the New Lafayette Theatre in Harlem, says: its task is "to show Black people who they are, where they are, and what condition they are in. The people, the community, the culture itself is the only entity that can cure its ills."

Toward this end, black theater draws both on natural gifts and a fertile tradition. Above all, on a vivid and vigorous language that makes up in imagery what it lacks in precision, a language at its best when spoken rather than written; a language serving as a code for the oppressed and therefore at times difficult for the uninitiated. (By a notable irony, this black language is gradually being adopted in general use—in the eyes of black radicals a symptom of "cultural genocide.") Black theater can also draw on a talent for expressive body movement that makes acting seem to come easy. And from the Negro church service it has inherited a ritual, a combination of word, music, and body movement, as well as a rapport with the audience that is enhanced when the happenings on the stage can be experienced as a direct part of one's own life. Precisely the absence of "aesthetic distance" makes black theater seem so vital to its eager audiences.

The cult element is heavily stressed in some of the more bizzare outpourings of the new black theater—except that traditional Old Testament imagery is replaced by would-be African and Muslim mysticism. The favored mode is a primitive morality play in many variations. Ben Caldwell, a young playwright close to the Black Panthers, has the Whiteman/

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Devil appear in various guises. In *The King of Soul* he comes as fatal tempter, from record-company lawyer to aircraft mechanic, while in an equally simplistic joke called *Prayer Meeting* a burglar, surprised by an Uncle Tom-like minister, impersonates God who transforms the minister into a leader of black revolt. The prolific Black Muslim Marvin X, in his child's fable *The Black Bird,* also makes the White Devil appear in various shapes—President, teacher, storekeeper. In his case, the Black God is Allah, and the Black Bird of the title, grown used to his cage where he makes a fortune for his white owner, is freed against his will during the burning of the White House. LeRoi Jones/Imamu Baraka draws the images for his revolutionary morality plays from his very own symbolism, concocted—rather powerfully, it must be said—out of sex, violence, and politics. His short play *Dutchman* signaled in 1962 the start of the new black theater—a scene set in a New York subway where a white woman first provokes a young black, and then stabs him to death. In his more recent *Madheart,* the Black Man attempts to cleanse his Mother and Sister of their white contamination with a firehose in order to avoid having to kill them, while the White Devil appears as a whore "with a picture of Christ pasted over her pussy space." In *A Black Mass* he has three Black Muslim magicians trying to exorcise the Whiteman's obsession with Time, and one of them tries in vain to tame a white monster by teaching him kindness, only to see the monster turn loose, killing, onto the world.

Jones/Baraka's language and imagery are extremely violent; his plays, like his poems, want to be "dagger poems in the slimy bellies of the owner-jews, . . . setting fire and death to Witey's ass." Their inventiveness makes this language all the more appalling in their racist hatred. For the sake of political expediency, Jones/Baraka has recently toned down his excesses, but there is no reason to suppose he has abandoned his devotion to racial apocalypse.

MUCH THE SAME applies to the numerous "agitprop" sketches written primarily for street theater groups, some of which are sponsored by semiofficial community organizations. They have, however, one advantage over their Communist predecessors of the 1930s: they appeal to potent group passions rather than to social ideology. Like all propaganda, they demand to be judged on their effectiveness rather than on their—frequently invisible—artistic merits. Yet when a talented writer such as Ed Bullins—about whom more later—tries his hand at such "Dynamite Plays," the result, as in *Death List,* has a certain interest. This brief scene, dedicated to "Al Fatah and its striking military wing," is little more than an enumeration of black signers to a pro-Israel statement. The reasons for their proposed "elimination" are uttered by a young "Blackman" while cleaning his high-powered rifle, alternating with rather weak remonstrations from his "Black woman" who begs him, "do not fear and distrust [the brothers]. If they seem different, it is only because they are getting closer to our Blackness." No one is spared, neither Shirley Chisholm ("Super nigger woman traitor . . . Goldberg lover") nor Richard Hatcher ("maybe you could have been something to black people"), A. Philip Randolph ("one of the shining colored hopes of the Left . . . now a tool of the CIA, Zionism and Nixon"), Bayard Rustin ("I can see the pain and fear of the recognition of your betrayal of black people in your eyes") and Roy Wilkins ("I am going to enjoy takin' you off, ole Roy"). To counter this political and artistic horror it is not sufficient for Bullins to end with a question mark: the man exiting with his gun, followed by offstage gunshots and a scream "No . . . No . . . it can't be!"— leaving his woman and us with the question of who has been killed and by whom.

Not all black theater is on such a simplistic level. Weakly evoked in *Death List,* the basic contradiction of revolution—humane ends and violent means—forms the dramatic motive in quite a few black plays. Many are more sincere efforts than artistic accomplishments, not surprising in view of the youth of the authors. In one play, *We Righteous Bombers,* Kingsley Bass, Jr., a young black killed in the Detroit riots by the police at age 24, shows the problem of the limits of violence hashed out among a group of guerrillas in a future America of Apartheid, with most blacks in concentration camps, controlled by black guards and black administrators. Though more a discussion than a dramatic action, the play touchingly expresses

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the doubts and loneliness of a young revolutionary. The author seems to speak through Jackson, a young poet, and Bonnie, the girl of one of the conspirators. Behind the words of his cool revolutionist companions, Jackson senses "the threat of another sort of oppression which, if ever it comes into power, will make of me a murderer. . . . I shall not strike my brothers and sisters in the face for the sake of some far-off city which may not exist." In the end, his wish for sacrificial self-destruction overcomes his reluctance to kill; he accepts the assignment to murder because he'd "like to die . . . blaze up like napalm in the flash of the explosion and leave not an ash of me behind." The author underscores the interchangeability of violence by having the same actors play the parts of revolutionists and officials. And Bonnie accuses the consiprators: "Murder is your last resort, you throwers of paperbombs and exploding bullshit."

BUT THE BLACK RADICAL, after all, is only a minor aspect of black life in America. This life in itself provides more important dramatic material. A substantial body of dramatic work has sprung up depicting it through raucous humor, bitter satire, and violent tragedy. Some themes are recurrent—the relation between man and woman, the Tom and the stool-pigeon, violence, addiction and alcohol, the hustler and the petty bourgeois, above all, manhood and self-assertion. This theater uses music, dance, and symbolism freely, but otherwise there is little experimentation. Basically it is naturalistic theater with strong admixtures of symbolism. In this kind of drama, the idiomatic language, the natural expressiveness of voice and gesture, the gift of caricature can come to full bloom, and even weak scripts can prove effective. Hence the appeal of playwrights that are essentially entertainers like Marvin Van Peebles (*Ain't Suppose' to Die a Natural Death*).

II

THERE HAVE BEEN a number of serious black theater groups, some lasting for several years: besides the New Lafayette Theatre in Harlem there is the Negro Ensemble Company (NET) under author-director Douglas Turner Ward on Off-Broadway and the more recent Cornbread Players with author-director Walter Jones attached to the Public Theater. In addition, according to surveys published in the magazine *Black Theatre*, there exist a number of amorphous groups in New York, Watts, and the Bay area in California, in New Orleans, Houston, and Columbus—the most notable among them apparently the National Black Theatre in Harlem.

Among the more substantial works should be mentioned Charles Gordone's *No Place to Be Somebody*, Lonne Elder III's *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men*, and Ronald Milner's *The Warning, a Theme for Linda*. The most successful of these, Gordone's rather old-fashioned play, is for some reason (which may have less to do with its content than the author's politics) despised by the more radical blacks. It is the story of an ambitious black operator who has taken over a Greenwich Village bar, trying to "make it" against all odds. After successfully facing the Mafia-extortionists, a corrupt judge, and assorted temperamental females, he finally succumbs on a dare to the gun of a light-colored weakling intellectual.

Elder's *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men* deals with another attempt to break out of the black condition. An old Harlem barber, his crony, his two sons—one a would-be artist, the other a petty thief—all live on the earnings of a hard-working daughter/sister. Their opportunity seems to come when Blue, a con man who is camouflaging his bootleg corn liquor business behind the political screen of a "Decolonization Committee," wants the barbershop as a front and recruits the thief for his gang. Their fling at high life comes to an abrupt end—the young thief is killed during a robbery, the daughter turns streetwalker, and the old man remains, his life broken, reduced to "a time when all he can do is act out the ceremony of a game" and die.

The strength of this kind of black theater lies in the way personal attitudes and conflicts are naturally grounded in social conditions. This is particularly true for the work of Ed Bullins, undoubtedly the most important and prolific black playwright. Now in his mid-thirties, he has already achieved a solid body of work in less than seven years—some 40 plays, many of them short, but including a number of full-length plays. With few aberrations—such as *Death List*—he has stuck to

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what in an interview he explained to me as his aim: to create real people of the real black world. When I tried to interpret his characters in terms of social types, he showed genuine surprise: "where you see types, I simply show people I know." The same surprise answered my compliment on the honesty with which he portrays the destructive and self-destructive side of ghetto life: "I only want to reflect the truth, the inner reality." He clearly prefers the hustler ("I know him better") to the preacher, revolutionary or otherwise. ("I never done too well with bourgeois values" he says, with an instinctive insight into the nature of many a revolutionary.)

Bullins's life reflects the path of the new black authors who have arisen in the Northern ghettos. Born and raised on the Philadelphia North Side ("not a bad place for blacks 20 years ago, until Temple U. came in"), he joined the Navy and then, in his mid- and late twenties, there followed some college and various jobs in California. Around 1965 he found his vocation in the drama, briefly serving the Black Panthers as their Minister of Culture. Both as artist and as black culturalist he was bound to come into conflict with their pseudo-Marxist doctrines, and when Robert Macbeth invited him to his New Lafayette Theatre, he came to New York to become its resident playwright and co-director, as well as editor of *Black Theatre.*

In his plays Bullins shows sympathy with the "street nigger," the hustler who outsmarts the system, both as the old flashy pimp or the new type of smooth scholarship student or "poverty" employee. He comes down with heavy irony on the "bourgeois Neegro," rather gently on the earnest civil rights girl or the religious-style political preacher, and savagely on the pretentious black nouveaux-riches imitating Hollywood living. These characters and their tribulations make even his lesser plays full of life: *Duplex, The Fabulous Miss Marie, The Electronic Nigger.*

The precariousness of this life becomes a central theme in his major plays, such as *In the Wine Time, Goin' a' Buffalo,* and *In New England Winter.* In a way, the old squalor was "safer" than the new "luxury." Hence, the various dreams of escape.

In *In New England Winter,* a very complex, many-layered play, we get Steve Benson, a studious fellow bringing off the well-planned payroll holdup that will permit him to settle somewhere with his girl and go on studying, only to find he has paid too dearly for his success by killing one of his friends on a misunderstanding, forsaking the love of his half-brother, and driving his girl into insanity.

The figure of Steve Benson, a character reappearing in several of Bullins's plays, has obvious autobiographical elements. Steve is torn between a longing to learn and the pull of street vitality. This conflict is most succinctly expressed in his big speech in *Duplex,* where he speaks of thoughts that make him "see the flames of hell that we all live in," and where he therefore wants to renounce his career "in this whiteman's land" in favor of "giving a last ditch try to save my balls . . . to build [a land] of my own" together with his sensuous black woman. But the conflict remains unresolved.

NONE OF BULLINS'S PLAYS is more autobiographical than his *A Son, Come Home,* a short play that I would rank highest among his works. It is the tender story of a 30-year-old wandering son, come home after nine years for a visit to his mother in Philadelphia, a hard-working, worn woman in her fifties, and it reflects Bullins's own loving attachment to his mother "who taught me to read & write/rite," as the dedication to his book *Five Plays* says. In a few evocative scenes, partly acted out by an anonymous Boy and Girl, it sketches the young man's life and his growing up, from the Philadelphia ghetto through his experiences in California to this reunion, half-missed, half-misunderstood—each reaching out for the other, each holding back so as not to hurt, and sadly realizing that they have parted ways, she into the consolation of a religious cult, he into Jazz and radicalism.

In this play, as in the best of the others, Bullins genuinely dramatizes his search for truth, for the "inner reality." As long as he, and black theater in general, will refuse to allow political and mystical fantasies to interfere with this search, his work, though written and intended for the black community, is certain to reverberate well beyond the ghetto. □

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Jesse Pitts

More Sorrow Than Pity

In World War II Jesse Pitts received the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Croix de Guerre, the latter from General de Gaulle's own hands. Although everything in his own past and in the background of the French side of his family leads him to respect and admiration for the Resistance, he feels that it is time to transcend the mythology of its victory.

The Sorrow and the Pity is a four-hour-long documentary film on life in France during the Nazi occupation. Its success seems to derive from two main sources: first, that it deals with such eternal themes as humiliation, powerlessness, and conflicting moral demands, the problem of courage and cowardice; second, that it is one of the few movies to break with the myth of an occupied France Gaullist from the start, resisting the invader in spirit before breaking out in a liberating insurrection.

When de Gaulle assumed power in 1944 part of the bargain he made with the French people was to return to it a feeling of glory—on condition it would agree to define Pétain and Laval as usurpers of French legitimacy. The politicians of the Fourth Republic continued the contract. Provided with scapegoats who were shot after dramatic trials (Laval, Darnand, Brassillach, de Brinon) or condemned to many years in prison (Pétain and members of the Vichy government), the average Frenchman could then be tranquil with the knowledge that collaboration or even *l'attentisme* (wait and see) involved *les autres* (the others).

Middle-Aged Frenchmen, I would think, want to see *The Sorrow and the Pity* because they expect some recognition of such facts as that the average French approved of the 1940 armistice and supported Pétain at least until 1943; that relations between German soldiers and the population in the small towns and villages were "correct," sometimes even cordial; that the Resistance, including the London Free French, involved only a small number of people—probably no more than five per thousand in the adolescent and adult population—while the militant collaborationists may have reached about half that number. Such Frenchmen would expect to see how easy it is to be timorous in the face of overwhelming force—that is, the *sadness* of being occupied. Many resisters were no angels, any more than all collaborationists were devils; people of good faith could be confused, paralyzed in their will; honor was sometimes invisible and silent, and audacity the excuse for sadism and banditry; and that is the *pity* of it all. In some ways the Frenchmen of my generation want understanding (rather than pity) for not having fought harder in 1940, for not having gone to London or joined the Underground, or spoken loudly of their anger when Jews were made to wear the Star of David, or when families were herded into trucks for an unknown destination. Yet part of them knows that after 1940 the fight was in other hands and there was little they could do to affect the final outcome.

France had been beaten in an unfair fight, but beaten nevertheless, and that is a social "role" with its own momentum and exigencies. In an occupied society, honor often takes the form of humble actions: misleading the police when they ask about someone barely known to you; listening to the BBC; acknowledging si-

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lently the sign of a friend back from London that he does not want to be recognized; putting up a visitor without question; bringing scarce food to a Jewish colleague fired from his teaching job and slowly starving in a cold flat. These unglamorous actions can often require as much courage as is required for charging the enemy in battle. The sadness of occupation—with the fear, the police, the self-doubt, the denunciations, the obvious comforts of those who fraternize with the victor—is that it takes so much more will to get through the day without abasement.

BUT MARCEL OPHULS'S MOVIE is not at all in this tone. It has sadness but very little pity. Ophuls shows contempt for such Frenchmen as Verdier, the pharmacist, whose resistance was limited to hiring two Jewish girls, and who had deadened the meaning of defeat for himself by comparing the war to a lost football game. Privatization was a narcotic: he remembers his joy when hunting was permitted once more; he worried so much about food shortages that he overfed his child. A hotelkeeper remembers the Germans as people who took girls to their rooms; the lycée professors, like the bent and seedy birds in the school courtyard, cannot remember the names of resisting students; the professional bicyclist does not even remember the Germans being much in evidence; Maurice Chevalier gives excuses for his trips to Germany that sound like mute accusations against himself. And when the cameramen and editors are not showing contempt by their questions and editing, they prod their subjects to show it—Mendès-France toward his judges, General Spears toward the French in general, Waffen SS veteran La Mazière toward Parisian society, D'Astier de la Vigerie toward his own family, the Grave brothers toward the Socialist party. The Grave brothers, archetypal French peasants, also declare that their resistance to the Germans antagonized their neighbors toward them. The interviewers do not probe this devastating comment. Who knows? Perhaps the Graves did not get along with their neighbors to start with. But the comment fed so well into the fantasies of the moviemakers.

All this anger and contempt does not prevent many in the audience from finding here and there in a four-hour "documentary" enough to feed the needs they brought to the movie house. And although the message projected is: "Why didn't you fight," "be ashamed that you did not fight," the message conveyed is often enough, "things were tough and we were all in this leaky boat together."

Regardless of his political intent, Ophuls's respect for his craft brings out some superbly moving moments. In the Mendès-France interview, Ophuls's admiration is certainly warranted, and the tale of how his escape from a Vichy prison was nearly foiled by the presence of two lovers debating whether they should go to bed is a rare study of courage, humor, modesty. In short, the mark of a great man.

La Mazière has a powerful role in the film. This aristocrat who joined the Waffen SS in August 1944 when it was obvious to all (including himself) that the Nazis were a losing proposition, impresses by the shrewdness of his analysis and his refusal to make excuses for himself beyond the *Geist* of his social milieu and the ambiguities of Vichy policy. It is his courage which evidently seduces the cameramen: it is a quality which becomes scarce among the losers.

There is another striking person, Madame Solange, the hairdresser who was arrested at the time of the Liberation, had her head shorn, was tortured, and sentenced to six years in prison for having written, allegedly, anonymous letters of denunciation.[1] She claims

[1] In a small town of some 3,000 people, a postmaster told me that he used to intercept every week a dozen letters of denunciation addressed to the local German Kommandantur. French villages do not seem, even in peacetime, to correspond to Robert Redfield's rather romantic view of folk society. Often in 1940 those who ran in front of the Germans had their houses ransacked by those who stayed behind. To the normal quarrels of peacetime the war added its own, and at the Liberation there was some settlement of accounts that had little to do with collaboration or patriotism outraged. Some 40,000 people were summarily executed during the months after the Vichy authority collapsed and before the Gaullist regime established itself—nearly twice as many as were shot by the Germans during the four years of occupation. Of those deported by the Germans (Foreign and French Jews, resisters, hostages, gypsies, even some black marketeers and common criminals), 150,000 did not return. And some 60,000 men, women, and children were killed in Allied bombing.

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that she was the victim of a machination by a woman whose hobby was imitating her friends' handwriting, a fact confirmed by the woman's husband during the trial. Is this a convenient alibi or was this tenebrous affair another French *histoire de fesse*, with a wife trying to get rid of a rival? The amount of emotional strain that Madame Solange tries to contain in her voice as she describes the torture of being nearly drowned in a bathtub (a method favored by the Gestapo and apparently picked up by "Gaullist" interrogators) is quite moving even if one doubts her story. At the end of her interview she is asked about her attitude toward Pétain; she has the opportunity to ingratiate herself (we were deceived, he was a poor old man). Instead, she sticks to her guns and tells of her admiration for the Marshal. Whatever Madame Solange was 28 years ago, she is not a base woman today.

MARCEL OPHULS FOCUSES a good deal of his movie on the Jewish question, as well he might, since there were some 600,000 Jews in France at the start of the war; and although the great majority survived, their moral even more than their physical suffering was one of the shames of that time. The mental health specialist Claude Lévy comments that France was the only country that cooperated in deporting Jews, thus making all Frenchmen guilty of that crime. I can understand Lévy's bitterness, but the reality is more complex.

The argument of the Vichy government was that by maintaining some form of legitimate French government it was able to reduce the total exactions of the enemy—what it called the "Polandization" of France. Of course, it said, in order to keep control it had to give some satisfactions to the Germans. Who gained the most from this arrangement? It is not easy to decide. Robert Aron, who wrote a history of Vichy,[2] seems to believe that the "avoidance of Polandization" argument has some merit, at least until the end of 1942. He gives the following example: On July 12, 1942, the German authorities ordered the arrest of *all* French Jews residing in the occupied zone, an order they could not carry out without the cooperation of the French police. But the French police would not move without orders from Vichy, which paid their salaries. Vichy was upset by the German order, and the following transaction occurred: The Germans will not deport French Jews in the occupied zone (until November 1942 France was divided into a zone occupied by the Germans and a free zone where Vichy had effective sovereignty); but in return Laval is to order the French police to arrest foreign Jews in Paris. Furthermore, he commits himself to surrender to the Germans 3,000 foreign Jews residing in the free zone, as well as all the German Jews.[3] "Upon learning of the agreement," writes Aron, "Pétain is indignant." On July 24 he tells Laval, "You must stop this dishonorable affair." Laval must have shrugged his shoulders: a deal is a deal.

Some, like Laval, seem to have felt little commiseration for the Jews they delivered to the Germans (they were supposed to be settled in a Jewish state near Cracow). Others resigned themselves to the deportations as an inevitable price to avoid more hardships for the great mass of Frenchmen. When de Chambrun (son-in-law of Laval) says that Vichy saved most of the French Jews, he thinks like a traditional French nationalist. In case of trouble you help Frenchmen first; foreigners, Jewish or not, come second. But for Marcel Ophuls there are no differences between German Jews, Austrian Jews, or French Jews. Still, if one day he were in Laval's shoes, would he refuse to sacrifice Arabs or Slavs if he thought it could save Jews? The question is hard, perhaps impossible, to answer, but this very fact should warn us against the temptation of righteousness.[4] Many Frenchmen hid Jews, protected

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[2] *Histoire de Vichy* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1954), pp. 527–28.

[3] After the occupation of the free zone by the Germans in November 1942, even French Jews will be arrested and deported. Most French Jews will vanish into the countryside, secure certificates of baptism, or change their names and manage to survive. The richer ones will make their way to America. Foreign Jews will find it harder to become "color of wall."

[4] At the end of World War II the American forces delivered to the Soviet authorities all the Russian nationals they encountered in their march forward. Many of these people had no desire to return to Russia. Some killed themselves rather than board the trains or boats into which the Americans herded them. I know of two Soviet women, mother and daughter (the father having

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them, fed them, warned them of their danger. Civil servants and policemen, through various forms of sabotage, did reduce the effectiveness of the German attempts to corral the Jews. A friend of mine told me that once he found himself at a railway station where Jews were being put on a train, with the usual crying, screaming of women, people clutching one another, and the German soldiers shoving people with their rifle butts. One bystander, well-dressed, white mustache, homburg and all, got angry and started to express his indignation. An officer made a sign and the soldiers shoved him in the train with the others. My friend says he often thinks of that man; perhaps he should have done the same. But in *The Sorrow and the Pity* there is no mention of the spontaneous and obscure help that many Frenchmen gave, sometimes at the peril of their life.

There is a painful moment in the film when storekeeper Marius Klein, whose name and appearance would lead one to believe him Jewish, is confronted with a notice he placed in the Clermont-Ferrand newspaper 27 years earlier, to the effect that although his name was Klein he was a Catholic. It is a painful sequence because the cowardice and probably even self-denial are patent. The trouble is that before the war there were many Jews who had converted to Catholicism or Protestantism. Were these conversions of convenience or were they surrenders of the soul to the superiority of Christianity? Jean Zay, minister of education in the Popular Front government—shot by an anti-Semitic goon squad—is mentioned by Mendès-France as being non-Jewish: he had converted to Protestantism, but his early writings would not lead one to believe that his faith was particularly ardent. It is the problem of all the *marranos:* who is to disentangle the mixture of sincerity,[5] expediency, fear, and betrayal?

If this is a film of sorrow and pity, it should not be for Marcel Ophuls, who spent the war in New York, to rub Mr. Klein's nose in the dirt. We see the face of Marius Klein with that sickening smile of humiliation denied. But I am tired of contempt. Perhaps it is because I am at an age where I go back as often as I go forward that I do not feel as much need as in the past to separate myself from the weak and the sinful. This is also one reason I am tired of the juvenophilia and the bourgeoisphobia that dominate the film, its intimation that it was mostly the youth, the workers and peasants who resisted the Nazis, anointed breeds with a special disposition to the good and the brave. D'Astier de la Vigerie states that the resistance was the vocation of the *ratés,* black sheep like himself. He speaks with the elegance of the aristocrat backing into the limelight.

TO MY KNOWLEDGE, no careful study of the social origins of active resisters has been made. My impression is that the *petite bourgeoisie,* which represented nearly a third of the population, was overrepresented. Shopkeepers—who profited greatly from the black market and are also often aggressively nationalistic—had trucks that were indispensable to resistance activities. Civil servants, clerks in town halls, schoolteachers, postal clerks had access to information networks that were strategic to the resistance. But the petty bourgeoisie is a category despised by the French intelligentsia, although (or because?) they often come from it. They prefer a condescending idealization of the workers and peasants.

Industrial workers, especially in the metal trades, worked directly or indirectly for the German war machine. The wages were good, and when the closing of a French firm left them unemployed, they were more responsive to the recruiters for German factories. Who would condemn them? A civil servant with tenure? Resistance required white-collar savvy, what with the importance of messages and the capacity to utilize the interstices of the bureaucracy for plotting, spying, or sabotage. It also required the possibility of allocating one's time, maximal for students and professionals but minimal for workers.

Peasants, especially in regions voting conser-

"disappeared" in 1937), who owed their escape to their capacity for passing as French. The British were known to be much more reluctant to deliver Russian "refugees" to the Soviet missions. And the U.S. government did not have the excuse of being coerced by superior force. These were the days of "Uncle Joe": "we did not know . . . ."

[5] The philosopher Bergson, very much drawn to Catholicism toward the end of his life, refused to convert during the war out of solidarity with the Jewish community, and wore the Star of David until his death in Paris in 1941.

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vative, tended to be Vichy *attentistes* (wait-and-see). The war reversed the terms of trade, and they made money from city dwellers who came on weekends to buy butter, cheese, chickens, and eggs at black-market prices. In southern France an anticlerical and left-wing tradition, a city-oriented type of agriculture (wine, fruit trees, truck farming) made the peasantry more accessible to resistance activities, be it only by refusing to report parachute drops to the police and feeding the Maquis. But in some regions the Maquis secured their food at gun point, and in some instances took along the silverware.

Railway workers were by the fatality of their trade among the greatest de facto collaborationists. They were also the most exposed to being victims of acts of sabotage or Allied bombing. As a working-class aristocracy—like the typographical workers—they were more involved in resistance activities and were given recognition after the War by movies (*La Bataille du Rail*). Nevertheless, we are still talking of groups that are contributing to that tiny percentage who resisted dangerously, heroically, before the Allied landings. As liberation approached and people became bolder, emery powder found its way into ball bearings. The Germans, once so pleased with French workers in the Lorient submarine pens, did not trust them any more.

The category most involved in sincere Vichyism (as contrasted with the militant collaborationism of Doriot and Déat in Paris) was the Catholic bourgeoisie. Yet there were also resisters from that milieu and they often had more in common with pro-German collaborationists in their class than with their *attentiste* cousins, and here D'Astier is close to being right. They were marginals, people not well integrated into their milieu: impoverished aristocrats with a condottiere spirit; people who had committed *mésalliances* or were the offspring of one; bourgeois "radicals," either of the Left or of the Right, although left-wing radicalism was more likely to lead to resistance than did admiration for Charles Maurras. Still, the early Free French were very much "Maurrassien," as was de Gaulle if we simplify things a bit.

So while ordinary people took the posture of "wait-and-see," the marginals went toward "deviant" commitments, signifying triumph or dishonor, and/or an early death.

As a matter of fact, the purported idealism of youth and its bravery is a result of youth's marginality. It is because youth is leaving the security of the parental home, while not having found as yet a new status security, that youth rushes into charismatic movements, national wars being a sort of institutionalized charismatic movement. Youth's bravery is too often but the search of a young body for a paroxysmic "high" and a search for legitimation by people who are not quite sure any more where they stand. To be brave and idealistic is, for the young, to give all to the supreme value (the Fuehrer, the Motherland, the Revolution), and to gain through the total gift of self the ennoblement that older people search for painfully through the daily cares of breadwinning and parenthood. Thus the young deny the relevance of our everyday judgment, which they fear, by rushing into a cosmic danger they fear less.

A friend of mine, a flyer in World War II, once told me:

> When I flew my missions it was not too hard, until I once had a date that very same night with a Red Cross girl I had known in college days. We were growing fond of one another, and that mission was much harder than the previous ones. I did not belong to myself any more. Because she was waiting for me, it seemed much harder to risk death. That night I broke it off. I told her I could not afford to fall in love while in combat. Life was simple, there were no choices. To fall in love was to reenter civilian life too soon.

YOUTHFUL BRAVERY, IDEALISM, self-sacrifice are often a turning away from complex and shadowy truths to a truth that is simple and promises eternal life even if one should die. When I was young I was ready to justify "the physical elimination of the ruling class" (Lenin) because "you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs." It was Bolshevism that invented the theory of the concentration camp and of self-righteous genocide. The Nazis followed. No wonder Stalin and Hitler fascinated one another.

Oh, to take back all those dead, the massacres of women and children, the peasants who froze to death in the trains taking them to Siberia. To take back the Moscow Trials, the denunciations, the terror of the knock on

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the door at night; to take back forced collectivization; to take back the October Revolution; to take back the "Third Period" madness of the German Communist party which cooperated with the Nazis in destroying the Weimar Republic, one of the most humane and progressive regimes the Western world has ever known.

Yes, we did not know. We thought the revolutionary wishes of our good clean hearts could make it come true. Like the Germans, we blotted out the bloody truths that kept seeping under the door. We were like La Mazière, who went out to defend civilization against Bolshevism and found that the virile fraternity of the Waffen SS meant to defend Auschwitz, Dachau, Buchenwald.

And then to sit in that movie and see Duclos, old Communist party hack, "who cried when Stalin died," claim the Resistance as a certificate of his party's patriotism—that was hard to bear! The interviewer, certainly not loath to ask hard questions, is here curiously silent. No one asks Duclos: When did the Communist party begin to resist? Why only after the Nazi invasion of Russia? What would have happened to the Communist resistance in France if Russia and Germany had signed a separate peace before the Allied landings? Nor is it possible to approve of the film's presentation of the Germans, which plays straight into all the cartoon stereotypes held by French nationalists (and many American intellectuals). Whether at the wedding of ex-captain Tausend's daughter or during the visit of the Sigmaringen castle, the Germans are shown as beer-swilling, fat with porcine eyes, militaristic (lingering shots of the Bundeswehr officers at the wedding). Ophuls uses German remarks about their successes during the occupation with the *mademoiselles* and about Alsace being really German, which must set French teeth on edge. What is he trying to achieve? Certainly not a better climate for a united Europe.

We are never going to be very successful in avoiding inhumanity if we keep on believing that it is inherent in a certain nationality, race, or class. If we believe in the devil theory of evil, the logic of the search for the good means a dictatorship of the anointed and the extermination of the evil ones.

La Mazière here doesn't seem to me to be coming out with great truths but, rather, his passive political outlook seems like the other side of the coin of the old (and now disillusioned) fascist. (And a bit like some of the old and once die-hard CPers who now are disillusioned.) A part of me approves the inaction of the French masses. Surviving in the world conflict was already an achievement. If all citizens were politicized to the level of heroism, social life might be impossible. The ordinary citizen wants to work, love, raise his children in peace, and the active minorities are constantly dogging him, telling him he has been humiliated, he must seek revenge, life will be so much better if he will follow this particular dream, for without a dream he will perish. Nevertheless, his inertia has probably saved society from many a disaster.

And yet patriotism (which is part gut ethnocentrism and part ideology) is not wrong either, since the film shows that occupation by an enemy is one of the worst social systems in which man can live, since it makes it all the more difficult to realize one's humanity and all the easier to fall victim to one's weaknesses. What then is left: *our* people, *our* freedom, a resolve that 20 years from now our children and grandchildren will not find themselves ruled by a Quisling, a Gomulka (a successful Laval); a hope that one day the equilibrium of mutual terror will become an equilibrium of mutual understanding.

If, following Anthony Eden's advice in the film, we dare not judge harshly the French who survived, can we nevertheless maintain our own will not to let it happen again? Can we fight for the truth of the mature man, elusive, conflicting, troublesome, against an enemy we shall not hate because we recognize the potential of all his errors in ourselves? Or must it inevitably be the blindness and the anger, the dehumanization of the enemy, the cycle of defeat and revenge, the eternal return? □

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In the Magazines

UNION DEMOCRACY REVIEW, No. 1, Fall 1972.

Unfortunately, few people except unionists know or care much about the internal life of the American labor movement. For those who are interested, Herman Benson's new *Union Democracy Review* is a must. A publication of the Association for Union Democracy, the *Review's* purpose is to promote the "principles and practices of internal union democracy in the American labor movement," and to report on the efforts of unionists to exercise their democratic rights.

The first issue carries a report on the Supreme Court's January 17, 1972, decision (*Trbovich v. United Mine Workers*). The decision gives dissident union members the right to intervene in suits brought by the Labor Department against trade union officials. Union dissidents have found it necessary to do this so as to ensure themselves proper representation in court, since they find the Labor Department is often an inadequate representative. In the case of the United Mine Workers, the Trbovich decision meant that the dissident Miners for Democracy would have the right to a fair chance in the December 1972 elections.

Union Democracy Review goes beyond reporting official actions of the courts and government bodies; it reports on the results of those decisions, and on the fate of dissident movements forgotten by the press. For instance, in the case of Local 6 of the Hotel Employes Union, the *Review* found that the Labor Department-Supreme Court action (1968) leading to new local elections has not given rank-and-filers the ability to contest local leadership. Obviously the struggle for union democracy must be continuous, and the *Review* gives a continuity of coverage unavailable elsewhere.

"On the Making of U.S. China Policy: 1961-69," by James C. Thompson, Jr. CHINA QUARTERLY, April-June 1972.

To the American public, the Nixon-Kissinger rapprochement with China seemed a bolt out of the blue, reversing a policy of two decades' unremitting hostility toward Communist China. In reality, the Nixon initiative was not based solely on a sudden policy shift by the Republicans, since throughout the 1960s Far East specialists in the State Department worked diligently to prepare the basis for a policy shift. So writes James C. Thompson, a Far East expert in the State Department under Kennedy and Johnson. When Kennedy took office, the State Department was without a large corps of experts prepared to advocate a change of policy toward China—this was a result of the McCarthy purges of the early '50s. Nevertheless, State Department discussion of possible initiatives toward China began as early as 1961. By 1962, Mose Harvey presented a paper in the State Department proposing rapprochement with China because of what he predicted would be a permanent Sino-Soviet split. The Kennedy administration tested Harvey's perspective, offering China "food-for-peace." Then, following up the peace feeler, Washington used the "heretofore sterile" Warsaw ambassadorial channel to reassure the Peking government that the United States was not supporting any Chinese Nationalist effort to invade the mainland. These efforts failed. Not only did China turn down American "charity," but the Cuban missile crisis and the Indochina border war forestalled further attempts at detente. Prospects improved in 1962–63 when Michael Forrestal, Allen Whiting, and Roger Hilsman entered the State Department and began to prepare new initiatives. The first two

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years under Johnson saw little activity toward detente with China as domestic politics and Vietnam absorbed the Administration. By late 1965, a major step toward unfreezing China policy was taken, when the State Department gave public health specialists clearance for travel to China, lifting a 15-year-ban. This occurred on the initiative of State Department Asia specialists, aided by McGeorge Bundy, despite Rusk's opposition.

In 1966, Vietnam seemed sufficiently stable to allow for greater movement in China relations. Bill Moyers played an important role in convincing the President that the public would support peace initiatives. On July 12, LBJ delivered an address calling for a policy of "cooperation and not hostility" with the mainland. Johnson even hinted at a resumption of U.S. trade with China and a change in the American position on Chinese representation at the UN.

Why were initiatives halted in 1966? Why did it take a Republican administration to bring flexibility to American policy? Thompson suggests a number of reasons:

(1) LBJ was insecure in his handling of foreign affairs, and feared to break radically with tradition.

(2) Secretary of State Rusk was a "theologian and zealot on Chinese Communist iniquity" and therefore did not push LBJ to take initiative.

(3) American policy-makers grew absorbed with Vietnam.

(4) China became absorbed with her own internal problems as the Cultural Revolution was unleashed.

(5) The Democratic party's fear of right-wing attacks lived on:

> Mr. Nixon was both lucky and shrewd. He came to office at the right moment in history in terms of Peking's evolving world view, American public opinion, and the bureaucracy's stage of development. He faced no danger from the Democrats to his left, and right-wing Republicans had nowhere to turn.

Perhaps the most important reminder Thompson's story has to offer, however, is the importance of the State Department's middle-level personnel; they not only can affect the way policy decisions are implemented, but, through sheer persistence, the very direction of American policy.

DAVID BENSMAN □

"Lincoln Vets Support Botwin Unit," by Saul Wellman. JEWISH CURRENTS, September 1972.

The author of this article was a political Commissar in the 15th International Brigade, composed of North and South American volunteers who fought on the Loyalist side in the Spanish Civil War; he is now, many years later, a leader of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (VALB), composed of Americans who fought in the International Brigade.

Wellman writes that in 1970 the VALB was informed that almost 100 Polish Jewish veterans of the Spanish Civil War, who had fought as the Botwin Unit of the Dombrowski Brigade, and who have since (because of Polish anti-Semitism) emigrated to Israel, had had their pensions cut off by the Polish government. The VALB, apparently loath to believe that a Communist government could do something quite so nasty, investigated the charges and found them true; it then made a number of efforts to apply pressure quietly on Polish officials in the U.S.; it also tried to bring up the matter at the 35th Anniversary Conference of the French International Brigade in November 1971. None of these efforts was successful.

The VALB recently sent a letter to all parallel veterans' groups throughout the world pointing out that the Polish-Jewish veterans "are of advanced age, many with infirmities received in Spain or in later anti-facist struggles" and appealed for further pressure on the Polish government. So far, to no avail. □

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Irving Howe

Of Things Past

AMERICAN COMMUNISM IN CRISIS, 1943–1957, by Joseph Starobin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 331 pp. $12.95.

For a certain number of persons Joseph Starobin's book will hold an intense interest. It presents, with authoritative detail and a serious effort at objectivity, the story of the collapse of the American Stalinist movement beginning at the point when Earl Browder was removed as its leader and ending at the point when both the Cold War repressions and the ideological stupidities of the CP brought it to ruin.

For many years an intellectual spokesman for the CP, Starobin had developed grave disagreements by the early 1950s; a few years later he aligned himself with the "revisionist" wing headed by John Gates and, in revulsion against the Khrushchev revelations and the suppression of the Hungarian revolt, quit the party. For people like Starobin the following years were extremely hard—abandoning the Communist movement was a kind of "religious deconversion" as life-shaking as to plunge into it. The admirable work of scholarship he has now written shows that, as intellectual and human being, he has come through.

A book of this kind must devote space to doctrinal issues not exactly sparkling in their present impact; Starobin manages them with skill and dispatch. His most absorbing sections, however, are those that deal, not with ideology, but with the movement's inner life. It is fascinating to learn, for example, that many active members of the CP failed to register with the Party upon returning from World War II: apparently the taste of life in the outer world, even in wartime, made the idea of going back to the constricted circles of American Communism seem unattractive.

Still more valuable are Starobin's pages on the "influentials," those Party members who had achieved prominence and power in trade unions but had to keep their Communist affiliation quiet. From a distance one might suppose that, having gained control of major organizations, these "influentials" would favor the "revisionist" line represented by Browder; and in the long run, no doubt, that was the direction in which they would move. But directly after the war, when the struggle between Russia and the U.S. was beginning and the CP claimed to foresee "fascism" at home, the "influentials," according to Starobin, were inclined

> toward intransigeance. . . . Dissatisfied with their own ambiguous position and privately assuring themselves of their revolutionary commitment in the most vehement and self-persuasive terms (for the very reason that they could not avow it in public), the influentials were often most impervious to the Party's advice of caution and patience.

And as he writes a bit later about "the peculiar sociology of the concealed Communists":

> To adapt itself to the separation between Party and union meant [for the CP-dominated wing of the CIO] to follow the logic of the success of the unions which had become autonomous . . . within the society. . . . Many a left-wing unionist in fact accepted the compulsions of this institutionalization as a matter of day-to-day practice.
>
> But for the very reason that the Communist influentials had not legitimized their political convictions, they tended in private to rational-

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ize their roles by assuming they were better revolutionaries than the publicly avowed Communists. . . .

THERE ARE OTHER, extremely valuable pages dealing with the inner life of the Communist movement, especially those on the "underground" period of the 1950s. Yet, as it seems to me, Starobin's book suffers from a major intellectual flaw. His conclusion is that, as a result of the Browderite Popular Front policy, the American CP had begun to establish itself as a genuine force within American life—anticipating, perhaps, the "coalition strategy" that has since won the support of most people on the democratic Left. But, continues Starobin, the CP faced an insoluble contradiction: it remained tied to the world Communist movement, switching its line on Moscow's orders after World War II and thereby losing all it had built up. Though in the main Starobin now writes as a man who has nothing in common with the movement to which he gave his youth and young adulthood, there are some pages in which he sounds as if he were still back there arguing for the virtues of Browderism.

It is a tricky question. Ripped out of historical context, the Browderite strategy in the late 1930s and during the '40s may seem better adapted to American conditions than the more "leftist" course followed at the time by Norman Thomas. But with this difference: Thomas's views were his own, they were *authentic,* whereas Browder's line had been imposed, as Starobin acknowledges, by Moscow and was to be annulled by Moscow. That a "revisionist" or "reformist" policy is the sole way an American radical movement can gain influence may well be true; but only on the face of it, as a temporary and distorting conjuncture, did Browderism stand for such a policy. When the famous Duclos article attacking Browder came out in 1945, Browder, yesterday hailed by his comrades as a great leader, found himself painfully isolated and reviled. The very comrades who had profited from his policies joined in the attack upon him, so powerful was their attachment to the Communist movement as a kind of secular church.

Now it may be said that even within the misshapen context of CP policy Browder was

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groping toward an appropriate American strategy, or that his views represented a recognition of domestic realities that in later years would lead to the massive withdrawal from the CP of many unionists. This, of course, is a more modulated and plausible kind of statement; but even then it is necessary to place far greater stress than Starobin does on the encompassing context of Stalinism as a total ideological movement within which the Browderite heresy arose.

BY CHANCE, there has just appeared an article by Philip Jaffe, "The Rise and Fall of Earl Browder" in *Survey*, Spring 1972. Jaffe, for many years close to the CP leadership, covers the same ground that Starobin does; his article is important, however, for a number of startling details that Starobin either did not know about or was too discreet to use. These details substantiate, I think, my view that Starobin makes too much of the "autonomous" possibilities of Browderism.

In September and October 1939, shortly after the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact, Browder received two secret messages from Moscow through a shortwave radio receiver set up in Long Island, messages regarded as so confidential in character he did not mention them even to the other top CP leaders. "Week after week, month after month," writes Jaffe, "while Browder's chauffeur sat before the receiver, nothing came through." But finally there came the sacred word from Moscow, which helped Browder make the short-lived turn to "The Yanks Are Not Coming" period that lasted until Hitler invaded Russia. There is a certain comedy in this revelation, for the secret messages that Browder kept hidden for decades until allowing Jaffe to publish them contain very little that could not have been read in the dispatches American reporters were sending from Moscow.

Jaffe further reveals—and this *is* a revelation!—that when the Trotskyist leaders of the Socialist Workers party were being tried under the Smith Act in 1941, "the [Communist] Party prepared for the Department of Justice an important collection of documents to help prove the guilt of the SWP." This shameful act, worthy of stool pigeons, occurred during the time Browder was head of the CP. One wonders, though, why the Department of Justice needed help, since the "important collection of documents" provided by the CP consisted mainly of excerpts from SWP publications. Perhaps the FBI couldn't afford to subscribe to the *Militant* . . .

During the war years, Jaffe writes, Browder was in indirect communication with President Roosevelt, sending him letters "full of warnings against a large variety of men and periodicals, like Roger Baldwin, Walter Reuther, David Dubinsky, Alex Rose, James Carey, James Wechsler whom he called a Trotskyite, and the following magazines: the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, the *New Leader* and *PM*, some for opposing the labor draft law."

Still another tidbit offered by Jaffe is that the famous Duclos article was not written by Duclos himself. At a Cominform meeting held in Poland in September 1947 Duclos was severely attacked by the Russian representatives, Zhdanov and Malenkov, as well as the then-leftist Yugoslavs, Djilas and Kardelj. Duclos, it turns out, had been guilty in France of the same "revisionism" for which Browder would be denounced in America. Only, Duclos confessed and Browder did not. Apparently, it was a bit of grisly Stalinist irony to have the letter denouncing Browder signed by Duclos.

For a long time, Jaffe writes, Browder kept trying to evade the realities of his past, but in 1971, now an aging man, he told Jaffe: "When I was in Moscow, I was like a child." Well, that's not quite the way one would put it, but given the source, that sentence has its value. Jaffe's conclusion is this: "Browder enjoyed extraordinary adulation from Party members and great respect in the communist world. . . . It is no wonder that he succumbed to the illusion that he was 'an independent' leader of his Party rather than an obedient servant of Moscow." In that party it could not be otherwise.

There is, then, a significant difference of opinion—certainly, of emphasis—in the views of Starobin and Jaffe, and while the analysis of the former is subtler in statement, the opinion of the latter seems to me more valid. □

To Our Contributors

- When sending manuscripts, please make sure that you do not send your only copy.
- And please also be sure to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. —THE EDITORS

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Richard Robbins

No Single Road

THE ILLUSION OF EQUALITY, by Murray Milner, Jr. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 172 pp. $8.50.

Sociologists frequently challenge the conventional wisdom not because they are perverse but because they must pay heed whenever their data do not square with prevailing ideas. So it is with *The Illusion of Equality*, a study by a New York University sociologist on the relationship of equality of opportunity to education—higher education in particular. Murray Milner demonstrates convincingly that contrary to what we think or hope, "expansion of the higher education system is not likely to increase either equality or equality of opportunity significantly." This is an important and sobering conclusion at a time when the school and college are often seen as the "up" escalator of social mobility. So far so good. But the same skeptical temper that results in a valuable revision of a sacred received idea about American society also tempts the sociologist to take a sounding on the whole of American society. So it is, again, with *The Illusion of Equality*. And here Milner moves from his discussion of education to argue unconvincingly about what went wrong in Marxism to portraits, Riesman-style, of national character ("The Excluded," "The Vulnerable," "The Chosen") to a catch-all diagnosis of the American illness ("endless striving") and a cryptic prescription for its resolution (income redistribution). In the process of generalizing his argument, Milner diminishes the value of his closely reasoned contribution to the sociology of education.

To summarize the intricate weave of Milner's argument: Americans, rich and poor, are caught up in "endless striving"—we believe in egalitarianism *and* in achievement, in equal standing before the law *and* in the rewards of striving which results in markedly different levels of income and status. A commitment to "equality of opportunity" enables us to pursue both values at once, though a hard price may be paid in the form of what Milner calls "status inflation, . . . a decrease in the social value attributed to a given objective amount of resources"—i.e., when so many people have achieved college degrees and white-collar status,

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then the diploma and the job are devalued even as they still stimulate "endless striving."

Milner's focus is on college, since the status race has now been moved beyond the high school. He contends, I think rightly, that expanded federal aid to students, the principal lever for reducing inequality in education, will not be dramatically effective because differences in socioeconomic background of families provide too powerful a set of advantages for some over others before, during, and to some degree even after college. Financial aid to colleges has a modest effect on social mobility but "no form of aid will change the patterns of mobility sufficiently to have significant effects either on equality of opportunity or on equality in the societal stratification system." Despite all our attention to education the data show that both rates of mobility and income distribution have remained relatively constant. In short, we are attempting to "beat" the class structure by applying pressure at the college level when there are too powerful "countervailing social processes within the larger educational and occupational structure."

Yet, as Milner shows, student aid to racial minorities is likely to be more effective because "Negroes who are able to obtain a college education during the next decade will probably be able to move much closer to occupational and income equality . . . ." This comparison of the different impacts of class and race essentially concludes Milner's analysis.

Why, then, Part III, marching under the grand flag of "Education, Social Conflict, and Social Change"? I do not know the answer except to suggest that "status inflation" and excessive striving can operate in a book as well as in the world. In any event, we are treated here to an analysis of the fact that emphasis on educational advance once restrained social conflict but now is more likely to deepen it. Probably true, but what of it? Milner doesn't say, because he is preoccupied thereafter with extended comments on "Marxist scenarios," student unrest, status anxiety, alienation, women's lib, and the black revolution, all to the end that "status-group conflict cannot be reduced to class conflict." Probably not true. But what of it, for we have already learned the essential lesson from Part II: "economic equality must precede rather than follow meaningful educational equality of opportunity." □

Monkey Business

REBEL AMERICA, by Lillian Symes and Travers Clement. With a new introduction by Richard Drinnon. Boston: Beacon. 392 pp. $3.95, paper.

Here's a curious case.

In 1934 two youngish writers, Lillian Symes and Travers Clement, both then active in the Socialist party and the latter to become for a time its National Secretary, published a very good popular history of American radicalism. Unsectarian, lively, and intelligent, it didn't get the applause it deserved—other qualities were then in demand. The book went out of print: Lillian Symes died; Clement moved on to other ventures, including a stint as an editor of DISSENT.

Now, at a moment when (or perhaps after) radical books sell in college bookstores, Beacon Press has reissued *Rebel America*. Good. It has gotten Professor Richard Drinnon to write an Introduction which tries to connect the socialism of the 1930s with the New Left of the '60s. Intellectually, this seems to me a misconceived effort—unless far more attention is paid to, and far more intimate knowledge is had of, the differences between the two periods than Drinnon commands. But let that pass, he has a right to his opinions. Historically, however, his Introduction is a scandal, since, though dated August 1971, it presents the New Left as if its early anarcho-fraternal phase, about which Drinnon is enthusiastic, were still the reality. About the terrorism of the Weathermen, the totalitarianism of the Maoist wing of SDS, the wretchedness of the ways in which the once-promising movement has repeated many of the worst aspects of '30s radicalism, Drinnon says nothing.

But more. Travers Clement, the very much alive co-author of *Rebel America*, was not consulted as to the reprinting of his book or the choice of Professor Drinnon as the one to introduce it. A postcard, sent either to DISSENT or some other socialist institution would have brought a simple answer as to his whereabouts. Such a query might also have evoked the suggestion that an author ought to have some control over the way his book is reprinted.

I. H. □

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LETTERS

Working-Class Authoritarianism

Editor:

I must confess that I become annoyed at the not infrequent efforts to refute my writings on "working-class authoritarianism" which attempt to do so by setting up a straw-man target in the form of propositions which either I never enunciated, or which are presented as a simple-minded statement of a supposed invariant monofactor relationship. Thus, Richard Hamilton, whose work Chandler Davidson cites approvingly as dealing my work "a fatal blow," has sought to refute it by publishing data which show that in some situations workers have been more antiwar than the middle and upper classes. Since, as far as I know, I have never written anything to the contrary, I have never understood what relevance Hamilton's research on the correlates of opinion on war has to my work.

Davidson, himself, assumes showing that Southern (or other) workers back antiracist candidates in higher proportions than middle-class whites because of economic class interests challenges my analysis. But as should be clear to anyone who has read me on the subject, I seek to explain political behavior as a result of a complex multivariate pattern. Any single factor such as the propensity of the less educated, the poorer, those more isolated socially, those in less complicated jobs, to accept simplistic "either/or" authoritarian or extremist approaches is only one factor, which *is more often not* determinant of party or candidate choices. The evidence which Davidson presents concerning the behavior of Southern workers is *congruent with,* not contradictory to, my discussion. I can only demonstrate this by quoting myself (the citations are from the most easily available source, the Anchor edition of my book *Political Man*).

> The "authoritarianism" of any social stratum or class is highly relative, of course, and often modified by organizational commitments to democracy and by individual cross-pressures . . . [p. 90].
>
> The specific propensity of given social strata to support either extremist or democratic political parties, then cannot be predicted from a knowledge of their psychological predispositions or from attitudes inferred from survey data [pp. 91–92].
>
> The poorer strata everywhere are more liberal or leftist on economic issues; they favor more welfare state measures, higher wages, graduated income taxes, support of trade unions, and so forth [p. 92].

I adduce a variety of attitudinal data in this article and subsequently in Lipset and Raab, *Politics of Unreason* (Harper & Row, 1970) to show that "the lower strata are least tolerant" in their attitudes, but I repeatedly stress "the fallacy of attempting to suggest that political behavior is a necessary function of political attitudes or psychological traits" (p. 92).

In specifically discussing the appeals of authoritarian movements, I point to the fact that in some countries, the Communists draw their support disproportionately from the better educated, while in others their predominant base is among the workers and other poorer strata (pp. 116–21). I note further:

> Despite the profoundly anti-democratic tendencies in lower-class groups, workers' political organizations and movements in the more industrialized democratic countries have supported *both* economic and political liberalism [p. 12].
>
> In spite of the workers' greater authoritarian propensity, their organizations which are anti-Communist still function as better defenders and carriers of democratic values than parties based on the middle class. In Germany, the United States, Great Britain and Japan, individuals who support the democratic left party are more likely to support civil liberties and democratic values than people *within* each occupational stratum who back the conservative parties. Organized social democracy not only defends civil liberties, but influences its supporters in the same direction.

To reiterate one of a number of points made in my original discussion, uneducated workers or other poor people, though more predisposed than the better educated and the more affluent, on this score alone, to be more intolerant, have repeatedly been attracted to more democratic liberal non-economic-issue movements, on grounds of economic and class self-interest, much as Davidson describes in a number of Southern cities. And the basic thrust of my discussion of political behavior in various parts of *Political Man* and other writings is an insistence on the primacy of the class factor. (See my chapter on elections, beginning with such a statement on p. 230.)

I would end by noting that as an extension of his argument, Davidson makes points about nonvoters which are identical to those made in *Political Man,* and about Huey Long, Barry Goldwater, and George Wallace, which were made at length by Earl Raab and me in *The Politics of Unreason.* In our lengthy analysis of the Wallace movement, we document in detail from survey data the way in which the trade union movement undermined much of Wallace's working-class support in the North, while he kept most of his middle-class base there. But that analysis is conducted within the same theoretical framework that Davidson thinks he and Hamilton have refuted by showing that the way to counter racism among workers is to make a class appeal. That is precisely what I wrote 14 years ago in "Working Class Authoritarianism."

Welcome to the Club. But Davidson ought to learn to read complex multivariate arguments carefully.

S. M. LIPSET

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CHANDLER DAVIDSON *replies*:

In sorting through Professor Lipset's generous documentation of his past and present views, I find little that is relevant to my essay. The issue is solely whether I misrepresented the content of his 1959 article, "Working Class Authoritarianism." His subsequent insights he dwells upon in his letter are consequently immaterial, as they were not mentioned by me. Concerning his article I wrote: "Lipset argued that the allegedly greater prejudice of the working class and the poor significantly affected their political behavior." He thinks I exaggerated the importance he attributed to personality in influencing politics, thereby creating a straw man.

Yet in tone and substance Lipset's article dramatized both the alleged pathology of the working-class personality and its dire political consequences. After quoting at length from an article, "A Short Talk with a Fascist Beast," based on an interview with a British worker, he went on for nearly 40 pages to describe the working class as disproportionately: prejudiced, undemocratic, fundamentalist, dogmatic, xenophobic, uninformed, productive of "the 'hard core' of 'chronic know-nothings,'" isolated, insecure, frustrated, aggressive, unsophisticated, suggestible, lacking "a sense of past and future," unimaginative, unable to "take a complex view," having a "dense and concrete life," "logical powers that are relatively undeveloped," and so on. Each of these terms is Lipset's not mine.

He also adduced, by rough count, 45 pieces of evidence that such personality traits predispose people to join all manner of "extremist" political groups, which is plausible once the portrait of the worker as brute is accepted.

Lipset did indeed mention qualifications, only some of which he refers to above. But as I have argued in my book *Biracial Politics,* if one takes each of them seriously they limit so narrowly the circumstances under which the thesis applies that it is impossible to test. A more charitable interpretation is that they are conventional disclaimers, of minor importance to the main theme. Further, despite the invocation in his letter of "complex multivariate arguments," a glance at his article's tabular data reveals none. His tables present only indices of class as they relate in a most uncomplicated manner to tolerance or support for extremist politics.

My essay cited Lipset's article as having contributed to the stereotype of the worker as more prejudiced and hence more predisposed than other classes to support racist politics. If Lipset now believes that such a view of the worker is a straw man, I am willing to take him at his word. But it is a straw man of his own creation, not mine. That I should be chastised for its collapse under the weight of evidence strikes me as somewhat bizarre. □

On Abortion

Editor:

Your Fall 1972 issue carried an article on abortion by Marvin Kohl; he compares a fetus to an acorn. Would you now publish the enclosed picture of a 16 week fetus and let your readers decide for themselves if his analogy is correct? [Our correspondent encloses a photograph from *Life* of a fetus that bears a clear resemblance to a baby.—ED.]

Those who hope to promote democratic socialism I would imagine are compelled to fight against abortion. . . . Interestingly, one judge of the Court of Appeals ruling upholding the constitutionality of New York's "liberalized" abortion law stated, in his dissenting opinion, that the arguments used by the lawyers defending the current law were similar to the arguments used by Nazi lawyers defending their clients at Nurenberg.

Unfortunately, there are Americans today who acknowledge the presence of human life in the womb and yet still remain adamant in their support of abortion—as an expression of a woman's right to decide for herself, to control her own body, or to bring into the world a wanted child. But to decide our own destinies, to control our body, to get what we want or avoid unwanted problems—is one thing; to kill our own baby in pursuit of these goals is another.

ANN STEWART

MARVIN KOHL *replies*:

Ann Stewart's letter raises questions of considerable interest:

(1) If someone were to submit a photograph of a germinating acorn would she (or her sympathizers) claim it was an oak tree? And if not, why not?

(2) Is *my* argument similar to those used by Nazi lawyers defending their clients at Nurenberg? Or, is this Nazi reference merely a maneuver aimed at shifting the argument onto different grounds in order to appeal to fear?

(3) Do we as democratic socialists want to claim that a moral society is obligated to meet the needs of the born and unborn equally? I think not. What, I believe, we want to say is that the rights of humans between birth and death take moral precedence over the rights of other beings. This is not to suggest that we should not be concerned about our special duties to the dead, the problems of ecology, or the rights of future humanity. But it is to claim that actual human beings are of more consequence than nonextant or potential ones, and that when there is a conflict of rights between born human progeny and animals, dead human beings, or future humanity, the rights of born human progeny take moral priority and ought to be maximized. □

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